

# IMPACT OF TELEVISION ON U.S. FOREIGN POLICY

Y 4. F 76/1: T 23/3

Impact of Television on U.S. Foreign... RING

BEFORE THE

## COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED THIRD CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

APRIL 26, 1994

Printed for the use of the Committee on Foreign Affairs



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# CONTENTS

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	Page
WITNESSES	
Michael R. Beschloss, director, Annenberg Project on Television and U.S. Foreign Policy .....	3
Ted Koppel, anchor, ABC News "Nightline" .....	5
Ed Turner, executive vice president, Cable News Network .....	8
PREPARED STATEMENT	
Michael R. Beschloss <sup>1</sup> .....	39
APPENDIX	
Witness biographies .....	35

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<sup>1</sup> Mr. Beschloss' prepared statement, in the form of a report he authored, is reprinted with the permission of the Annenberg Washington Program in Communications Policy Studies of Northwestern University.



# IMPACT OF TELEVISION ON U.S. FOREIGN POLICY

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TUESDAY, APRIL 26, 1994

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,  
*Washington, DC.*

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:06 a.m., in room 2172, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Lee H. Hamilton (committee) presiding.

Chairman HAMILTON. The Committee on Foreign Affairs meets this morning to examine foreign policy from a slightly different angle, the impact of television on U.S. foreign policy.

There can be little doubt that television has had an impact, perhaps a profound impact, on the conduct of U.S. foreign policy. Spurred by technological advances ranging from satellites to cellular phones, vivid images of conflict and deprivation are sent instantly to American homes from the world's trouble spots, whether in Haiti or Somalia or Bosnia or the Persian Gulf.

These televised images quickly become a central part of the foreign policy debate. They affect which crises we decide to pay attention to or which we ignore. They affect how we think about those crises, and I have little doubt these televised pictures ultimately affect what we do about these problems.

Television can educate the public and focus attention on far off trouble spots that may otherwise be ignored. It can provide world leaders the means to communicate with each other directly in a crisis.

But television also encourages policymakers to react quickly, perhaps too quickly, to a crisis. It allows the media to set the agenda. It generates pressure for action selectively: why Somalia and not Sudan, why Bosnia and not Nagorno Karabakh?

Television, critics say, leads not to sound foreign policy, but to sound bites masquerading as policy. Secretary of State Christopher has warned that television cannot be the North Star of our foreign policy, but it may be too late.

Pictures of the starving children, not policy objectives, got us into Somalia in 1992. Pictures of U.S. casualties, not the completion of our objectives, led us to exit Somalia last month.

Pictures of the market bombing in Sarajevo helped get us more deeply involved in Bosnia. Pictures of U.S. casualties, should they occur, could lead us to pull back.

What can be done, if anything, to counter the impact of television on our policy? What should policymakers do, if anything, to prevent television from setting their agenda? What, if anything, should the

media do to avoid inadvertently skewing American foreign policy one way or the other?

To explore these questions, the committee this morning will hear from a distinguished panel:

Ted Koppel is a television journalist with more than 30 years of broadcasting experience. ABC's Nightline, which he hosts, premiered back in 1980, in response to the seizing of American hostages in Iran.

Ed Turner is executive vice president of Cable News Network. He began his television news career in 1959 with KWTW in Oklahoma City, and has been at CNN since it began operating in 1980. As executive vice president, he is responsible for all of the network's news-gathering resources as well as the network's Washington-based interview shows.

Michael R. Beschloss is an historian, the author of several books, including "The Crisis Years: Kennedy and Khrushchev, 1960-63," and director of the Annenberg Center Project on Television and U.S. Foreign Policy. He has served as an analyst for CNN during a number of foreign policy crises.

I understand a number of my colleagues have statements, which we will hear before we begin with our witnesses.

Mr. Roth.

#### STATEMENT OF MR. ROTH

Mr. ROTH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

We on our side of the aisle, Mr. Chairman, commend you for holding this hearing this morning. We feel that it is very important. In today's world, television plays a central role in shaping our foreign policy. For example, as I have often said, had it not been for television we would not have been in Somalia.

For Bosnia, for Haiti and for the Middle East and for other hot spots, the pictures on tonight's news will do more to shape tomorrow's policy than anything that the diplomats say or anything we in Congress say.

Moreover, television is a medium for a new kind of diplomacy. Heads of state use television to send public messages to each other. Governments, pressure groups, even terrorists all use television to mold public opinion and push governments in one direction or another.

As satellite TV signals penetrate even the most closed societies, this technology will do more to bring down repressive governments than anything the United States can ever do. No wonder China, Iran, and Cuba are all trying to control TV satellite dishes. So TV can have a beneficial role.

But I am concerned that TV images often propel the United States into playing the world's policemen, rushing to intervene in the latest foreign problem that in reality we can never solve, simply because it is on television. I have witnessed that from my 12 years serving on our Foreign Affairs Committee.

Today's hearing can, I think, give us a much needed lesson, and I just hope that my colleagues are all paying attention and our witnesses, I am sure, will speak frankly.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman HAMILTON. Mr. Manzullo.



## STATEMENT OF MR. MANZULLO

Mr. MANZULLO. Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you for the opportunity to come here. I recall just one instance among many wherein television and the openness that it provides resulted in legislation introduced by Congressman Pombo of California and myself that was in direct reference to the children who lived in Romanian orphanages.

As a result of what people saw on television, we introduced legislation and met with Romanian officials to help free those children from those horrible asylums as they were in Romania. That is only because somebody had an alert TV crew that caught a horrible situation and brought it to light. And we want to thank you for that.

Chairman HAMILTON. Mrs. Meyers.

## STATEMENT OF MRS. MEYERS

Mrs. MEYERS. Mr. Chairman, Somalia was called a CNN intervention because the sight of starving babies on TV was what prompted the decision to intervene. And then the image of American soldiers being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu was what led to the public demands for withdrawal.

However, media influence on foreign policy is really nothing new. Yellow journalism was blamed for helping incite the Spanish-American War—William Randolph Hearst's comment to Frederick Remington, "You furnish the pictures. I will furnish the war."

In the early 18th century, Britain and Spain went to war because of British newspaper stories about the Spanish supposedly cutting off the ear of a British sea captain, the War of Jenkins' Ear.

I think the questions to pursue are whether the stark visual images might prevent an examination of the context of the issue, and how they might be manipulated by creative editing.

I look forward to the hearing, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman HAMILTON. Any other statements?

If not, we will begin with our witnesses. Mr. Beschloss, why do we not start with you.

**STATEMENT OF MICHAEL R. BESCHLOSS, DIRECTOR, ANNENBERG PROJECT ON TELEVISION AND U.S. FOREIGN POLICY**

Mr. BESCHLOSS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I thought, in the interest of time, I would—

Chairman HAMILTON. Speak right into those microphones. They are voice-activated, and you have to pull them close.

Mr. BESCHLOSS. OK. I will, indeed.

Chairman HAMILTON. Thank you.

Mr. BESCHLOSS. I thought, Mr. Chairman, that in the interest of time I would make just a brief oral statement, and if I could ask that my prepared statement be entered into the record.

**CHANGES IN FOREIGN POLICYMAKING ENVIRONMENT**

The history of the past 30 years shows very dramatically how television news has transformed the environment in which Presidents and Congress make American foreign policy. If you look at the Cuban missile crisis of 1962, you see that John Kennedy enjoyed

luxuries that no President will ever have again. Had the Soviets slipped missiles into Cuba in the modern age, you might have a situation in which a network-leased satellite would have discovered them at the same moment the CIA did. And, therefore, instead of the 6 days of secrecy in which Kennedy deliberated, you would have televised demands from Congress immediately, also from citizens, all putting great pressure on the President to decide very quickly how to respond and to announce that response.

We now know from historical literature and documents that if Kennedy had been required to make that kind of quick decision, he probably would have bombed the missile sites. He probably would have invaded Cuba. We now know that this had a very great danger, much greater than we knew at the time, of touching off a nuclear war.

At the same time, in 1962, the ability for the American President to address the American people live from the oval office gave Kennedy, as it gave later Presidents, a very substantial weapon with which to gain quick support for their policies, the kind of weapon that a Franklin Roosevelt might have liked and did not have in the late 1930's, when he was campaigning very strenuously for greater American engagement against fascism in Germany and Japan.

In the interest of time I would like to just simply close by making five summary points.

#### INCREASED PUBLIC AWARENESS AND ENGAGEMENT

Number one, thanks to television, and also thanks in no small measure to our two other witnesses this morning, Americans in 1994 are better informed about and more engaged in world issues than they ever have been before.

Number two, television coverage of a dramatic foreign event can instantly engrave an international issue or ongoing conflict on the public mind, arousing the public about issues that might have been a lot more diffident about during the pre-television age. And as the chairman has suggested, a very good example of this is Bosnia 2 months ago.

#### POLITICAL BENEFITS OF CRISIS MANAGEMENT

Number three, because it focuses on the tangible and the dramatic, television tends to reward crisis management over crisis prevention. In the words of the late Richard Nixon, whose passing we observe this week, "Americans often believe only what they see on television." The effect of this could be to build into our system a tendency for political leaders to be more impatient with private deliberations whose sole purpose is to ensure that certain international dogs do not bark.

#### POLITICAL BENEFITS OF SHORT-TERM INTERVENTIONS

Number four, when use of force is required in the television age, a President and Congress will benefit if the venture is as brief and bloodless as possible. Obvious examples: Grenada in 1983; Libya in 1986; Panama in 1989; and, of course, the Persian Gulf war. If use of force must prove to be costly and long, our political leadership in the modern age has to very carefully consider how to avoid a sit-

uation in which Vietnam War-style continuous coverage does not drain public support for that military venture.

#### WHO WILL FRAME THE ISSUES

And, finally, point five, in peacetime if a President and Congress do not work very hard to frame international issues for the public all the time, television can do a lot to frame them instead, and in ways that may very much limit the flexibility of our political leadership.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Beschloss appears in the appendix.]

Chairman HAMILTON. Thank you, Mr. Beschloss.

Mr. Koppel.

#### STATEMENT OF TED KOPPEL, ANCHOR, ABC NEWS "NIGHTLINE"

Mr. KOPPEL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

This will flow very nicely, because I am going to pick up essentially on the last point that Mr. Beschloss made.

A preliminary observation, if I may. I am here in response to your kind invitation. I am not, however, an executive of ABC News, and the views I express here this morning are strictly my own.

#### TELEVISION WILL FILL LEADERSHIP VACUUM

You have invited us here today to respond to a number of thoughtful questions, some of which are easier to answer than others. For instance, the perception that U.S. foreign policy sometimes shifts in direct response to television coverage—you suggest Somalia and Bosnia as examples—and you ask: "Is that a correct perception?"

The easy answer is: "Of course." Indeed, I am inclined to believe that you intended the question to be all but rhetorical. We would not be here this morning if you and the other members of this committee did not think that television has, in certain instances, had an impact on the government's conduct of foreign policy.

Beyond that, I think there is a reasonable inference to be drawn that you do not think it to be a good idea. Well, neither do I.

It is not, however, a new phenomenon; indeed, it predates the invention of television. When British newspapers reported on the problems of "Chinese Gordon" in Khartoum, public response was such in London that the British Government felt obliged to dispatch a relief force under the command of General Kitchener.

Outside factors tend to influence the formation of foreign policy, to a greater or lesser degree, in almost direct proportion to the amount of credible information and policy direction that a government otherwise makes available.

To the degree, in other words, that U.S. foreign policy in a given region has been clearly stated and adequate, accurate information has been provided, the influence of television coverage diminishes proportionately.

To state that premise in reverse, television's influence increases in regions where an administration has (a) failed to enunciate a clear policy and/or (b) has done little or nothing to inform the

American public on the dangers of intervention or failing to intervene. The two examples you put forward are excellent case studies.

In the course of this opening statement, I will be referring to a number of critical observations about foreign policy initiatives. They are not, as you will quickly observe, unique to me; and I cite them, not for the purpose of engaging in a foreign policy debate, but rather as examples of what can happen when an ill-defined policy is forced to mature too quickly in the spotlight of intense news coverage.

#### THE SOMALIA EXPERIENCE

Prior to the appearance of the first television pictures from Somalia, for example, the Bush administration had done little or nothing to marshal public support for any kind of massive aid operation. It is probably fair to say that the relief operation came together when it did, in part because U.N. Secretary General Boutros-Ghali had been pushing for it for months, in part because President Bush saw an opportunity to perform a great humanitarian act between the time of his November defeat and the inauguration of President-elect Clinton, and in large measure because of intense public reaction to the horrific television pictures of starvation and total anarchy in Somalia that were being shown in this country.

In fairness, the Bush administration did clearly state the mission and the term. It tried, though, to finesse the issue of how it would deal with the warlords and their huge arsenals; and that, of course, ultimately led to the disorienting image of a retired U.S. admiral, who was heading the United Nations mission, directing a manhunt for General Aideed in a manner which may or may have reflected U.S. policy at the time. Certainly it no longer reflected U.S. policy once we began seeing television pictures of a dead U.S. Ranger being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu.

Neither the Bush nor the Clinton administration had clearly addressed the issue of what Washington would do in the event of U.S. casualties. Nor had it laid the groundwork for explaining to the American public why such a price might be necessary. The Clinton administration was, therefore, placed in the exceedingly difficult posture of trying to make those explanations after the fact; and even then it was only done, as you all know, to buy time, so that it would not appear that the United States was cutting and running.

#### CONSEQUENCES OF FAILURE TO ARTICULATE POLICY

The point, Mr. Chairman, and it is equally applicable to Haiti and Bosnia and Korea, is that when an administration fails to set forth a clear agenda of its own, it will become the prisoner of somebody else's. For example, I have nothing but admiration for the courage, commitment and dedication of Randall Robinson, who is now beginning the second week of a hunger strike to protest America's policies in Haiti. But if U.S. policy toward Haiti is right, it should not be changed because of Mr. Robinson's hunger strike. And if that policy is wrong, then changing it now will amount to doing the right thing for the wrong reason.



This government's foreign policy is already perceived as being too responsive to public pressure. A war in Korea, for example, would undoubtedly produce hundreds of thousands of casualties. Does anyone on this committee believe that the administration has adequately prepared the American public for the remote possibility of that happening?

And if it is not even a remote possibility, then why pretend that the United States is prepared to consider options that might lead to war? If and when the crisis breaks, it will be too late to lay that kind of groundwork any more.

In the absence of a clearly enunciated foreign policy toward the Serbs in Bosnia, we are left floundering in a sea of options, none of which seems to have considered the consequences that would flow from them. We are still dealing with the possibility of up to 25,000 U.S. troops being sent to Bosnia to maintain peace if and when it has been agreed to by all sides. The suggestion is that if the peace breaks down the troops would be withdrawn. In other words, we would send them if they are not needed, and withdraw them if they are. What kind of a policy is that?

A number of your distinguished colleagues are proposing that the arms embargo against Bosnia be lifted, so that the Moslems can defend themselves. Has anyone yet considered just how that will be calibrated if Moslem forces are successful and begin to retake territory that they have lost. No doubt the Serbs might then be willing to come to the peace table, but will the Moslems?

My point, Mr. Chairman, is this: The absence of a clearly formulated and enunciated policy is like a vacuum. It will be filled by whatever is available, Congressmen having themselves publicly arrested in response to the leadership of a committed activist, voices from the loyal opposition, or, for that matter, television reports, which often contradict reality as presented by administration spokespeople.

In a vibrant democracy like ours, each of these factors will always have some influence; but when a policy and its consequences have not been adequately explained, an informational vacuum will have been created that gives an even greater resonance to those who bear no real responsibility for carrying out U.S. foreign policy.

#### FUNCTION OF TELEVISION IS TO INFORM

You ask whether television executives consider the impact of their reporting on foreign policy? Rarely. Should they? In my opinion, almost never.

I realize that still sounds like a revolutionary concept, even though its foundations were laid nearly 200 years before the advent of television. But we, who report on events, should not be policy-makers. We have a responsibility to be fair, accurate and even-handed; but only in the areas of instances—when lives, for example, are clearly and unambiguously at risk—should we be expected to take the consequences of our reporting into account.

Should we, for example, have refrained from showing pictures of starving Somalis because it might lead to U.S. intervention and because that intervention could then lead to the death of American personnel? What if we had not shown those pictures? Should we be prepared then to take the responsibility for losing the hundreds of

thousands of lives that were reportedly saved by the operation? Should we refrain from showing the American public what is happening now in Rwanda because that might lead to U.S. or U.N. intervention? Or is the argument the very reverse? Should we not have shown that Ranger's body being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu, because now we are disinclined to intervene when perhaps we should?

With all respect, Mr. Chairman, it is our function to inform, it is your function to consider, debate, advise, consent, fund or not fund; and it is the function of the executive branch to make decision and carry out foreign policy.

No doubt, the seed of satellite communication and the acquired sophistication of both friends and adversaries in using that technology to their own best advantage, require a great deal of further attention. Ultimately, though, it boils down to the same thing: If an administration has thought its own foreign policy through, and is prepared and able to argue the merits and defend the consequences of that policy, television and all its new technologies can be dealt with. If, on the other hand, the foreign policy is ill-conceived and poorly explained, then it does not much matter whether the news arrives by satellite or clipper ship—it may even arrive by clipper chip these days, Mr. Chairman—eventually, the policy will fail.

Thank you, sir.

Chairman HAMILTON. Thank you, Mr. Koppel.

Mr. Turner.

#### **STATEMENT OF ED TURNER, EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, CABLE NEWS NETWORK**

Mr. TURNER. Mr. Chairman, members of the committee. This is a difficult assignment for me. As you may know, we at the Turner organization are not permitted to use the word "foreign" in our writing lexicon except, of course, for proper names. And it is not quite as quirky as it may sound. After all, if you live in Paris and you are watching CNN doing a story about street demonstrations outside your apartment building, it might be a bit insulting to hear the participants all described as foreigners. They are not foreigners to you, the consumer. And this goes to part of what this hearing is about, I think.

#### **THE MISSION OF TELEVISION**

First, a definition of news—remembering that if you get 10 journalists together in a room you will have about 15 definitions. News to us is that which is significant, important, interesting, a slice of our lives, a piece of our times. It is our job and responsibility to chronicle accurately these developments by the hour, by the day, by the week or year. We are reporters. We bring in experts to comment, criticize, analyze, and pontificate, but we are reporters.

We are not educators, although we may serve to educate; we are not public-spirited citizens of the country or the world, although what we are telling and showing may serve to uplift and depress the public spirit. We are not cheerleaders or naysayers ourselves; we are observers and not participants. We show passion because we are human, but we try to be without prejudice, and above all,

our command from the other, somewhat wealthier Turner, is to be fair.

I say all of this to emphasize that our mission is to inform, and after that it is up to the viewers what do with the news that they have heard. It would be a dreadful form of elitism for us to attempt to direct the viewers what to do because we know best. We do not. Sometimes we have not a clue as to what is best or worst.

The press has always had an impact on the creation and execution of foreign policy. Now it is faster. And with the speed comes another factor: the quick catalyst.

But what is a news organization to do? The technology is there and it is not going to go away. Satellites are not going to be disinvented. The electronic gee-whizzes will grow in sophisticated capabilities and not diminish. The only question is how responsible will the organizations be using that equipment? And there will be many more news organizations to come, even more than we can dream of sitting here today.

We at CNN do not consider the impact of our proposed coverage on policy, the United States or any other country. We are seen in 265 countries live right now. If we began to attempt to figure in foreign policy, the organization would wind up in a swamp of "what ifs" and "maybes." And that is not our job as we see it and as defined a few moments ago.

I do not mean to sound cavalier; but "damn the torpedoes" is also not a CNN policy. We do our best to create a workable format to tell a story about what is going on at a location of an event for which the script may not be written, and we must do it by the seat of our pants. Here is where the journalism in the news organization comes into play and is so vitally important. Decisions are made in the field and at the control center that must reflect solid news judgment, but not in a vacuum. We are as anxious as any journalist on deadline to have all the research we can get, and it is for this reason that we call in experts around the globe to come on live on CNN and tell us what it all means, how we got in such a mess and how to get out.

#### NEWS JUDGMENT AND ACCESS

Why we cover what we cover is determined by several factors, the first of which is: Is it news? Is it important to a general news audience across the globe? Is it truly important, or is it a trifle? The next is accessibility.

In the example you gave in your letter of invitation you mentioned Sudan versus Somalia, as Ted has noted. While we have had our Nairobi bureau chief in the Sudan, we are not granted visas or any other work permits to spend any time there. We have tried. The bureau chief left Rwanda recently with a gun at his head and true fear that he was going to be shot on the spot. It is not a hospitable place.

Somalia was open, although at times very difficult and dangerous. We could at least get the crews and the equipment in to do our work. In CNN's case, we do not have any dark areas on the globe; we have affiliates or bureaus or agencies everywhere, and we look everywhere for reports.

In the end, though, it is news judgment and access. If a place is open to coverage and the story is solid, you can expect to see and hear a great deal of that story. Policymakers make policy, and I would not instruct them on how to do their job, except, it is my view that they would be far better off in the end if the public in the United States understand what they are trying to accomplish, and this means an open exchange of information with the news organizations. If the public officials cannot manage that, then get some new ones.

Thank you.

#### SELECTIVITY IN NEWS COVERAGE

Chairman HAMILTON. Well, on that rather threatening note, we will begin our questions. The testimony is excellent. We appreciated it very much.

Most of you seem to be saying to us that TV is neutral, that you are reporters. But is that really the case? I mean, the mere fact that you decide to cover one story and not another one, or that you give a story a particular slant, does that not take you out of the realm of neutrality in reporting and objectivity?

Mr. TURNER. David Brinkley once said news is what we say it is. I do not believe that Mr. Brinkley meant that in an arrogant sense, but that you cannot tell everything. That is being amended these days because of the enormous expansion, the explosion of news vehicles, news agencies, news time on television and radio, news in print, that much of it can be told for those who care to find it.

Chairman HAMILTON. Speak up at any point. We are proceeding very informally here.

#### THE ECONOMIC FACTOR

Mr. KOPPEL. I think you make an excellent point, Mr. Chairman. One of the realities of news coverage, I think everywhere in the world, but particularly here in the United States, is that there is an economic imperative. Let me give an example.

A couple of my colleagues, Peter Jennings and Dan Rather, are going to be reporting over the next few days from South Africa. When a news organization makes the decision to commit the resources that are required to back up an anchor, a great deal of money and time and effort and technology has been invested in doing that. I think I can predict with some sense of certainty that over the next few days you will be seeing a lot of reporting out of South Africa on the ABC and CBS evening news programs. It is totally appropriate that that be so. It is a big story.

If some other big story breaks in some other part of the world, it will be covered, but because of the commitment that has already been made to covering the story in South Africa, it will perhaps get a little bit less coverage than it might otherwise get.

#### MEDIA NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR CONSEQUENCES OF REPORTING

The point that I was trying to make, and I think it is responsive to your question, is that no matter what it is that determines how and why a story is covered, I do not think you should ask of news



organizations and of television organizations that they be responsible for the consequences of their reporting. If we start, Mr. Chairman, trying to figure out what the consequences of doing it or of not doing it are going to be, I think we will be paralyzed into total inaction.

Chairman HAMILTON. All of you acknowledge that television has a major impact on policy, do you not?

Mr. TURNER. Absolutely.

Mr. KOPPEL. I do.

#### POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IN THE INFORMATION AGE

Mr. BESCHLOSS. Yes, and I would say that, given the system as it is now, the most you could ask is for television news organizations to cover the news as thoroughly as possible and also with as much context as possible, but the shock absorber has to be the political leadership in this country. If you have an issue that is very important to the interests of the United States that is not covered, or perhaps if it is covered badly or in an way that is shrill or that arouses Americans to do something that perhaps is not in the interest of the country, that simply puts the burden on the President and Members of Congress to explain the issue to Americans as powerfully as possible and frame it as much as possible.

And I think in the television age one thing that this has done to members of the executive branch and also here in Congress is to suggest that the more discussion of international affairs the better.

#### IMPACT OF LIVE REPORTING

Chairman HAMILTON. The technology of the day impacts you as much as it does us. The mere fact that you have to report as it is happening requires you to make a lot of quick judgments about the news. You do not have any time to put the news in perspective. We do not have any time to put the news in perspective because it is reported to us immediately.

The question is, because you have to report live, what does that do to the quality of news reporting?

Mr. TURNER. I live with this every day, and for the most part I can think of no egregious errors that we have committed by virtue of being live as opposed to tape delay or not at all, that if a mistake is made, there is time enough to correct it. And if the event is worthy, one would expect to see on the other networks, as well as later on our own, that kind of package that sums up the events of the day and puts it into historical context. That, because of technology, works as a positive force as well because with the satellites, with the creation of the cable channels, with who knows how many more hundred to come, there will be more opportunities than ever for the public, for those interested in public affairs, to hear more than they ever could in years gone by about events of the day.

So while it can have an untoward impact—one never knows—it also can have a positive influence.

## REPORTING VERSUS JOURNALISM

Chairman HAMILTON. Mr. Koppel, you wrote about this in a *Washington Post* article, referring to your Vietnam experience.

Mr. KOPPEL. I did. And I was about to take mild issue with my friend and colleague, Mr. Turner.

As I wrote in that article, I think focusing a camera on a live event is a miraculous technological achievement, but it is not journalism. Journalism lies in the evaluation of an event, it lies in the analysis of the event, and most important of all, I think, it lies in editing. Editing is really the most important aspect of journalism, I think. And to a certain degree we are all in this day and age prisoners of the electronic tail wagging the editorial dog. That tends to happen.

What Mr. Turner says is quite accurate. I do not think that there are many mistakes that get across on the air on CNN, and I think CNN does an absolutely superb job of covering events. But I think it complicates the process of journalism when the first images that Americans sometimes get are not filtered through the process of journalism. I wrote in that same article that I think good journalism is to an event what a good map is to a geographic region. It is necessary to reduce it in size, but nevertheless remain absolutely true and as faithful as you can to the main features of the event.

Chairman HAMILTON. Mr. Roth.

## PRESSURES FELT BY PUBLIC OFFICIALS

Mr. ROTH. Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Turner, I have often felt that the information age helped destroy the Soviet Union, but I am not so sure the information age is not going to undermine our Government, too. And the reason I say that is that CNN has pioneered this creation of the global village, which was predicted some 30 years ago.

But do you get the sense that the nation can survive the present form when everything happens instantaneously?

Someone here had mentioned that the political leadership has to be the shock absorber. You can put it on TV, but when I vote to send troops into Haiti or Somalia, I have got to consider that some of these people are going to die. So I cannot just make a snap decision. I have got to think about it, and so for you to say that I and my colleagues are going to be the shock absorber, that is really putting us in an impossible position.

Mr. TURNER. Well, it is not our desire to put you in a tight or a loose spot. And you have every right to step back and say give me some time to think about it.

Mr. ROTH. In theory, that sounds great, but in practice that is not the way it happens, because Congress is also greatly affected by public opinion. And when instantaneous public opinion comes to bear on Congress, it makes a big difference, and not always for the better.

## THE IMPACT ON NATIONS OF THE INFORMATION AGE

Mr. TURNER. To the larger question that you raise, though, I think that more information and not less, more news and not less, more coverage and not less, is what is best for this republic; and

that when all is said and done if you ask the people of Central Europe, you ask the people of China, if they are given a chance to speak, you ask the people of the old Soviet Union, they would agree with that conclusion.

Mr. ROTH. Well, let me ask you this: Do you think that the nation-state can survive in the global information age?

Mr. TURNER. Indeed, and flourish.

Mr. ROTH. Well, I do not know if I could agree with that. I think that there are no boundaries. I mean, the very fact that you have got the industry you have, you said you cannot use the word "foreign" in your broadcast——

Mr. TURNER. Because it is——

Mr. ROTH [continuing]. Does that not tell me that there are no boundaries really left?

Mr. TURNER. Oh, there are strong cultural boundaries. There are ethnic boundaries. There are boundaries of prejudice and boundaries of optimism. There are boundaries created by a marketplace, boundaries created by pollution. There are all manner of boundaries, all manner of layers in this life that we look at as citizens, as individuals. And our role is to tell more about them and not less.

And I have to conclude, in a free country, the more information, the more news, the better.

#### CONGRESSIONAL-PRESS RELATIONS

Mr. ROTH. Mr. Turner, do you not think that we have to redefine our roles? Traditionally, we in the Congress and the press are adversarial. But do we not have to become more like partners in this new world we are moving in to, in order for us to function?

Mr. TURNER. Every survey has indicated that what the public wants from the press is not a partnership, although we can work together on some projects, but what the public wants and expects is a watchdog. And I think that that is the mindset of most of today's general interest journalism. That is the nature of news as we now define it. News is what went wrong today. News is that which is the aberration.

Walter Cronkite once said news is not how many cats did not get run over by the commuters driving in to work today; and he is right. I do not mean to sound simplistic. But our view of it is as a watchdog, as an adversary, albeit at times a friendly one.

Mr. ROTH. Well, sometimes I feel that the press is exceedingly negative. Yes, you should be a watchdog. But sometimes everything in the media seems to be negative, and I think that can destroy the people's trust and confidence in their government. When that happens, it is impossible for the government to function. I think that is one of the problems we have.

Mr. TURNER. Yes, sir. Your point is well taken.

#### ROLE OF THE REPORTER

Chairman HAMILTON. If the gentleman will yield.

Throughout your statement, Mr. Turner, you talked about being a reporter. Now you are talking about being a watchdog, an adversary of government. Those are two very different roles.

Mr. TURNER. Well, but adversary is a natural outgrowth of being an observer and a chronicler. I think that one is a logical step to the other, and not inconsistent, Mr. Chairman.

What Mr. Roth brings up, in terms of negative news and bad news and grim news, is a point that we wrestle with all the time, and I think, though, that there is a good deal of positive news there, only we do not insult the audience by so calling it, because that implies, of course, that all the other news is bad news. If you say this is good news and that is bad news, well, that is not necessarily so.

There are many, many reports done daily on government at the Federal, State and local level that are indeed quite positive. But you do not set out to say this is going to be a positive story that is going to lighten your day. You set out to report and tell an interesting story.

Chairman HAMILTON. Mr. Beschloss.

#### CONSEQUENCES OF SELECTIVE REPORTING

Mr. BESCHLOSS. The other thing I would be a little bit worried about is the slippery slope problem. It is one thing for television networks, for instance, to say that they will not report the results of exit polls while Americans are still voting on an election day, but what I would be worried about is a television network where, for instance, satellite coverage is flowing in from a country abroad and you have producers essentially making decisions according to their own vision of the public interest, what to withhold, what not to put on and what to put on.

Obviously, in certain cases that is necessary to save American lives, and in other extraordinary cases. But otherwise I would be a little bit nervous about television producers making those kind of decisions. I would rather have the free marketplace operate where you have television networks putting on as much as they have, analyzing it as much as possible at the time those pictures appear, but basically leaving decisions about the national interest not to unelected television producers, but to those who are elected by Americans to defend that institution.

Chairman HAMILTON. Mr. Hastings.

#### POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND THE NEW TECHNOLOGY

Mr. HASTINGS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Gentlemen, all of you seem to suggest, and I think we all agree, that the cataclysmic explosion of technology is going to continue to impact us for some time to come. That being taken as a given.

Can you, understanding that we, particularly those of us in the laity, Congresspersons notwithstanding, need your help in better understanding that technology so that we can work with you on critical matters of developing policy in light of all of that technology?

Mr. Koppel, for example, made the reference to the clipper chip, and I think by the time that technology is being utilized, that we need your assistance in understanding the dynamics. In short, I am kind of following my colleague, Mr. Roth, in saying that somewhere along the line we are going to have to develop other practices than we have at present if we are going to be able to develop the policy



that we must, and if you are going to report on not only what we develop, but report as you perceive things be undertaken in your responsibility as journalists.

Let me continue my line by saying I understand the need that you have to get there first with the most accurate account. I understand the need for openness, and you all seem to cry out for that. But policy is sometimes best developed without the heat of lamps or the stroke of pens. And occasionally you stumble across it, or it has leaked, and it does serious, serious damage to the policy that is being developed.

And I am curious, can we develop policies and practices that will take into account the grave consequences of our actions, and that is both policymakers and the media? And I note, Mr. Koppel, that you said that almost never do you or should you take into account the consequences. I take mild issue with that, because I think we are entering into this enormous new territory that we need some new dynamics and understandings about.

Mr. KOPPEL. Well, let me respond, Congressman Hastings, to the specific point that you are raising.

When I say that we almost never can consider the consequences of what we are reporting, I say that in the following context. If you ask me to consider the consequences of what we do report, you must also ask me to consider the consequences of what we do not report. If we had not shown you those pictures from Somalia, I think we can probably all agree here this morning that the massive rescue operation that was ultimately conducted never would have happened.

The consequences of that would arguably have been that several hundred thousand people who did not starve to death would have starved to death.

You do not want the press, if I may respectfully suggest, in the position of making policy decisions for you. That is why you were elected. That is why we have an executive branch of government. I would also suggest, I do not think we have really begun this morning to adequately explore the exploding nightmare of what is going to happen when you have direct broadcasting systems where, indeed, as Congressman Roth was suggesting a moment ago, national boundaries are all but irrelevant.

#### DEMOCRATIZATION OF TECHNOLOGY

I was in Romania a few months after the revolution there and went to a small city called Timisoara. Timisoara is where the Romanian revolution against Ceausescu began. It began there in large measure because Timisoara just happens to be the closest Romanian city to what was then Yugoslavia, and in those days Yugoslavia was still carrying broadcasts from my colleague's network here, from CNN, and the people in Timisoara were seeing what was happening in the rest of Eastern Europe and were encouraged thereby to begin their own revolution. That is peanuts compared to what is going to happen in the future, because in the future you will, quite literally, have thousands of individuals who have the capacity to broadcast, not through a network, not through a local station. In other words, you will not have us as filters any more. Information can flow directly from any point in the world to any point

in this country. Americans will have, and probably already have, hundreds of thousands—and soon will have tens of millions—of very small dishes which will enable them to receive direct broadcasting from anywhere in the world.

And there is a democratization of technology that is going on right now. This has put small Super 8 cameras into the hands of tens of millions of Americans, and they inadvertently end up covering news events and then selling it to local stations. So you are now going to have, literally on a global level, that same kind of thing happening, with the end result that any government, any rebellious group, any political group that wants to send its message directly to American viewers can do so without going through a network and without going through a station.

So even if it were a good idea, and I do not think it is, that you and we in some small fashion were to cooperate on what we cover and what we do not cover, the technology has already outstripped that. You would make your agreement with us, only to find that there were other people who were then reporting and bypassing us altogether.

Mr. HASTINGS. Thank you.

Chairman HAMILTON. Mr. Hyde.

#### PRESS TREATMENT OF PUBLIC FIGURES

Mr. HYDE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Just a few comments, if I may. We elected officials exercise a public trust. The public has a right to trust us. They trust us when they elect us. I think the media has a public trust too because you are trusted. And I think you have to be very, very careful that this enormous power, without responsibility, which is a very heavy mix, is not abused. And you are human beings like we are human beings. You have your predilections and your biases and your preferences, and you try, you try to keep them out of the mix so that the news is presented in a balanced way.

But I just suggest to you that you have a serious problem in maintaining your credibility because of the disparate treatment many public figures receive at your hands.

For example, Anita Hill has been celebrated and made a heroine, and maybe she deserves it, I do not know, I would not presume to know. But I know a similar situation where a charge was made against a very prominent political figure, and that is ignored, relatively ignored. I think that is about the third charge. If that had been made of Richard Nixon, the hated Nixon, or the hated Reagan, why, Larry King Live would have had many, many programs questioning and analyzing, and we would have seen that—we would have seen a fiesta of media coverage. But because the people involved are different and because, as Mickey Kaus has said in the *New Republic*, this is the best President we have had in a long time, we want to protect him, that is going on. And to deny it is to deceive yourself, because we all know, everyone in the country knows it.

So I think that power without responsibility can be very dangerous, and it can do the opposite of what you want it to do or what you pretend you are doing, namely, inform the public in an unbiased way. I think you have to be careful of sanctimony.

## POWER OF TELEVISED IMAGES

Now, that said, two more things. I do not think freedom and justice and democracy has ever been served better than by the television coverage of Beijing. I do not think anybody will ever forget the work CNN did, and others did, seeing that young man stand in front of that tank. The forces of democracy were crushed, but temporarily. China and the world will never be the same as a result of that fantastic coverage. And that, as I say, deserves the highest praise.

On the other hand, I am not convinced, as a World War II veteran, one of the dwindling few, that Hitler would not still be alive in his dotage today if we had the cameras covering the landing at Normandy and some of the other places. I have no answer to that. I am not complaining. That is the reality, and that is what went on.

But the emotional buttons that are pushed by seeing people killed and maimed are very powerful, and I think history would have gone in an entirely different direction had we had the coverage that the media today would want of that kind of landing. And, again, I am not being critical. I am just saying that is the power of the images you are able to generate. And I just think you have to be so mindful that you have this power, and how it is used.

## CALL FOR MORE THOROUGH NEWS ANALYSIS

Lastly, just put a plug in for McNeil/Lehrer as against even Nightline, although Nightline is very good. But you need time to develop some of these ideas. They are not quick one-liners. And yet because of the constraints of time, when you go to this guy and this guy, and you better be interesting and you better be colorful, that does not help the public as much as sitting there boring, I will grant you, but sitting there and developing some of these ideas with a more intelligent and less energetic give and take, and McNeil tries to do that.

Crossfire, God love you, it is entertaining, but the moderators are intervening at every—I try to see if they let anybody ever finish a sentence, and pretty tough, but it is fun, and maybe that is what it is for.

Mr. TURNER. You do very well on there, Mr. Hyde.

Mr. HYDE. Pardon?

Mr. TURNER. You do very well on there.

Mr. HYDE. Well, I am tapering off, I can assure you. But anyway, those are just some of my thoughts, and I think it is great for you to come up here and share your views with us. But you are at the throttles of power like none that has—stronger than the atomic bomb, because you can move nations and civilizations by the images that you choose to portray.

## ISSUE OF CREDIBILITY

Mr. TURNER. I think, Mr. Hyde, you are right on the money on the issue of credibility. That is all the news organization truly has to carry it through good times and bad is credibility. And once lost it is almost impossible to retrieve, and it takes years to acquire it. And we know that it goes at risk every day, and that is why in my



statement, and Ted in his, emphasized the responsibility that goes with all of this. It is not—it is not taken lightly. I would not want members of the committee to think that in a very offhanded fashion or with a flip of the coin that we decide coverage at our organization, and I know the same thing is true at ABC, CBS, NBC and PBS, that we carefully consider, and the internal debates are often more fierce than we will get from the public. You can imagine what we heard at CNN during the Gulf war with Peter Arnett in Baghdad.

I had a call one day from Southern Bell that told me that we had managed to back up the phone calls in their system to three states away, and what in the world was I going to do about it. And I said beats me. If we had listened to the outcry from the public, we would not have been in Baghdad. And sometimes you take the unpopular stance because you think it is the right thing to do.

But nothing is done in a cavalier or impromptu fashion, and you are just absolutely right. Integrity, credibility, that is the whole reason for doing it. Otherwise, go into something else. If you cannot be honest, if you cannot be honest in what you are doing every day, why do that? Why lie? Go into the propaganda business. Become a proselytizer, but not in the news business.

#### DIFFICULTIES OF MODERN PRESIDENTS IN FIGHTING WARS

Mr. BESCHLOSS. I think another part of this is, Mr. Hyde, that excellent reference to the difficulties that modern Presidents have in fighting wars. One of the things that we heard in the run-up to the Persian Gulf war was that in the wake of Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon's loss of support for the Vietnam war and the degree to which that was affected by nightly television coverage of what was going on in Southeast Asia, any modern President would have a difficult time, for instance, carrying out the U.N. goals in the Persian Gulf.

The reason why George Bush was able to generate such a surprising amount of support for that action in Kuwait, both before the war began and throughout those 6 weeks, I think, was an extraordinary and rather impressive display of Presidential leadership. This was a President who recognized that in the wake of Vietnam there are certain difficulties that are incumbent on a President as he tries to do something like this. He dealt with it, and I think achieved something that many of us during the months before that war began would have felt would have been very difficult.

#### POLITICAL LEADERS MUST FRAME THE ISSUES

So what this suggests is that we are in a period of transition. As you have got more and more coverage of foreign affairs, the political leadership begins to develop a capacity to make sure that these issues are framed well and that support is gained for those policies. It is lot tougher now than it was 40 years ago for someone who is a political leader dealing with foreign policy. Forty years ago, it was a lot tougher than it was a half century before then. In the 1920's and the 1930's, you began to have a lot of international news coming into the print media soon after the event occurred. That was something that would not have happened in the mid-19th century. An American President would have had a much easier



time, say, in 1850 selling his view of an international event than a President might have in 1925. So my point would be that this is a continuing process.

Chairman HAMILTON. Mr. Rohrabacher.

#### CALL FOR JOURNALISTIC PATRIOTISM

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I am a former journalist myself, and in fact when I——

Chairman HAMILTON. Pull the microphone up.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. And when I first ran for office, I guess that did not play against me. In fact, my constituents rather liked the fact that I was not a lawyer. That was my motto, you know, at least he is not a lawyer. You know, vote for Dana. But anyway, to the subject at hand.

Mr. MANZULLO. You flunked out. [Laughter.]

Mr. ROHRABACHER. The first question I guess we have to ask is, is TV coverage of this hearing going to affect our discussion on the effect of TV coverage on policy. I mean, I have listened to your discussion the other night on the Whitewater coverage, and it seems to me that we have reached a point in America that we are so self-introspective that we just have to think about thinking about it, about thinking about it, and perhaps we should just get on with being free citizens and leaders in our own arena.

I do not agree with you, Mr. Koppel, that all these things are going to be settled by leadership and by people who can come forward. I mean, I would hope American leaders are a cut above leaders in different parts of the world. But the fact is a free society depends on everybody working together, and that does not mean we cannot disagree and disagree really fervently, because that is part of a free society, but we all have a part to play in a free society.

For example, I worked for Ronald Reagan. I was one of Ronald Reagan's speech writers. He knew how to use the media to create public opinion to bolster support. But I think that being a former journalist, I think journalists have to be patriotic as well. I mean, I think that you really have to determine what effect your reporting is going to have, not only just on lives, but what effect it is going to have on the future of our free society, of the United States of America.

#### A GRENADA EXPERIENCE

I remember we had an event, and it was really tragic. It was the fellow that—and I believe this was Grenada—and he had lived—it was the first anniversary of the invasion of Grenada, and there was a fellow that had lived right up until, he had been wounded in Grenada and he had lived almost to the first anniversary, and his father was there with him when he died just like a week ahead of time. And I was working with the President on these remarks, and it was a very touching story about how the man talked to his son, and as he was dying in front of him, and he said, well, was it worth it? And the son looked up and said, yes, it was; you know, it was worth it. It was worth my life to do this for my country.

And we have had the event. The President honored the father. The father was there and talked about how the courage of the par-

ents and the families, but also how important this was to all of the people who gave their lives in Grenada.

And then after the event in the news coverage, I will never forget this, and I will not repeat what station it was or what reporter it was, he said, "well, of course, the President did not explain that this man was the victim of friendly fire." This man was a hero. You know, he was a hero, what he had done.

One of the things our people do when they go to Desert Storm and they go to Grenada, the fact is they know they might be killed by Desert fire—or friendly fire. That is one of the reasons they are heroes.

I was really devastated after that, because I felt the person who did that report was intentionally just sort of downplaying this man's heroism, this American's heroism. And I cannot help but feel that in the long term that is going to have an affect on our society, where people say, "well, it is all, you know, what can we believe in anyway."

And when I say we all have a part, it is not just the news media, it is not just the leaders, but it is also the people of our country. And if the people of our country are being led to believe there is nothing worth fighting for, or every time you do make a stand, you know, it is something negative is involved like, "he was killed by friendly fire" instead of standing up to the enemy, I think it has its impact.

So I guess I am asking about long-term impacts of what your job is rather than simply looking at it just in getting the most information out the quickest.

Mr. KOPPEL. Well, I cannot speak directly to the case that you cite, Congressman. But I am familiar with some of the conditions that caused Americans to die under friendly fire, and those conditions involved, among other things, an unwillingness to share technology among the various services. You had people using radios on frequencies that were not tied in with the frequencies of other units that were also attacking Grenada at the time.

And I would argue with you that I think it is the highest form of patriotism, even though it may seem unpleasant at the time, to raise issues like that when they happen, to put them into their proper context so that they do not happen again in the future.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Mr. Koppel, I totally agree with what you just said. I am a former journalist. I believe in freedom of the press. I think that is exactly the role the press should play. In this case that is not what I am talking about. In this case we had a situation where the President of the United States was trying to inspire the American people, and the media intentionally gave a cynical twist on it in order to prevent the President from basically uplifting the American people.

#### PRESS FREEDOM AND QUALITY OF JOURNALISM

Mr. KOPPEL. Well, let me just pick up because Congressman Hyde said that we have a tendency toward sanctimony, and I think he is exactly right. But there is also a tendency, I think, on the part of our critics to use that sweeping term "media."

Mr. ROHRABACHER. OK.

Mr. KOPPEL. I do not presume to instruct any of you, who undoubtedly know a great deal more about the Constitution than I do. But one of the fascinating things about the First Amendment is that it allows any one of us in this country, without licensing, without having taken a test, without meeting any set of criteria, to be a journalist. And inevitably that means that we have a hell of a lot of bad journalists, a few mediocre journalists, a lot of good journalists, and some outstanding journalists. And to the degree that you are going to come after us as a group, it is awfully tough to defend the profession. To the degree that you want to come after me individually, go right ahead and do it.

Mr. ROHRBACHER. That is very fair. And I will just say, in terms of your show, I appreciate Nightline. I appreciate—I think that we would be better served if, rather than just more information and the press trying to give it to us as here is a fair analysis, there would be more discussion back and forth between people who have honest disagreements, as you try to bring out on your program, and I think that might serve the public a little bit better if we get in more depth, and I think that is what Henry was talking about with McNeil/Lehrer.

Thank you very much.

#### IMPACT OF LOCAL TELEVISION REPORTING ON COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

Chairman HAMILTON. Mr. Manzullo.

Mr. MANZULLO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I really have more of a comment than a question. Mr. Koppel, your show is unique because if you need more time to bring out the truth, you just say we are going to run over a few minutes.

Mr. KOPPEL. Not if our affiliates have anything to do with it, Congressman.

Mr. MANZULLO. Well, that is refreshing, because many times it will be in the middle of a show, and all of a sudden, oops, that is it. Along comes some advertisement. But you simply say hang on, we will be right back, and the person is allowed to not only fully develop, but conclude a thought. That is rare.

Three or four observations. You know, journalism has undergone a tremendous change, and sometimes it comes back and forth and ends up where it started. The newspaper clippings that Lincoln had in his billfold the night that he was killed were only favorable clippings because back in those days the press just went hog wild in the criticism. And we have gone from the television era of Crossroads, Father Knows Best, Ed Sullivan, and perhaps Bob Newhart, to a situation such as what happened in Chicago a few months ago. A community of pastors in the inner city got together and literally boycotted a television station during the Neilson ratings because the television station, they said, placed too much of an emphasis on crime in the area where those churches were located. As a result of the emphasis on crime, volunteerism was down heavily among the parishioners. And because volunteerism declined, crime was beginning to increase in the area where the TV station had been doing its news.

I am not saying it is a matter of fault on the part of the TV station, but these 100 inner city pastors were simply saying that, in



their opinion, there was an overemphasis upon truth, as it were, that led to some dramatic consequences.

I have no answer to the comments I have given. If you have a comment on that, I would appreciate it.

#### EXAMPLES OF JOURNALISTIC RESTRAINT

Mr. KOPPEL. I think the only defense that any American citizen has against bad journalism is good journalism. The only restraints that are placed upon us in large measure—those of us in broadcasting have somewhat different restraints, obviously, because we are licensed—but the only restraints that I think should be placed upon the practice of journalism in this country is that other journalists should not be afraid of criticizing us when we do something wrong. I think we have a moral obligation to correct the record.

If I may, Congressman, I just come back to the allusion you made to another story having to do with a sexual scandal, and you were delicate enough not to name the politician, so I will not, either. But let me point out that similar charges were also made against a politician of your party who held the same high office, and to a large extent those stories did not run in the mainstream media precisely because we had done our job. We checked into it, and we were unable to find any confirmation of that.

It is very difficult, just as it is difficult for people in the intelligence business ever to get credit for what they do because their successes never make the news, when we do not run stories because we have done our homework, because we have done the research and because we do not feel that what we have found warrants putting it into a newspaper or a magazine or on the air, you never know about it, but that is when we are doing the job properly.

#### NATURE OF A FREE PRESS

Mr. TURNER. I have been doing this for 40-some years, and come to the conclusion that the viewer, the audience, the reader, the consumer of this news, is a pretty smart, tough bird—sophisticated, resilient, and can see through the canard and the nonsense pretty well. I have a lot of confidence in the American viewer. Now I am learning something more about viewers worldwide, and they are not terribly different, I am happy to say.

Journalists are a difficult lot, rambunctious and independent. Fortunately, in this country we do not have a monolith. There is not a state-owned anything that tells us what to do and say. And so you have the good with the bad with freedom. And I think most of us would settle for freedom rather than something controlled by an all-knowing state. And it has its problems with it, and Lord knows it is imperfect.

#### TELEVISION BRINGS KNOWLEDGE

Chairman HAMILTON. Mr. Leach.

Mr. LEACH. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I am struck by this discussion on the impact of TV in U.S. foreign policy, about whether this is a worrisome problem or one that we ought to be celebrating. I mean, if the basis of the issue is

whether too much knowledge is better than too little, then it strikes me as self-evident that television brings more knowledge, and therefore is more a positive than a negative.

But I think it is very interesting when you talk about pressure television places on Members of the U.S. Congress. The single greatest mistake this Congress has made in the post-World War II era is one related to an incident that television did not report, and that was the Gulf of Tonkin incident—an incident that may not have occurred, and if it occurred, it was a wooden boat attacking the U.S. Navy. Based upon that we gave license to an executive branch of unprecedented breadth. Possibly if there had been a TV crew on the ship that was attacked, we might not have reacted in quite the same way. And I only raise that for perspective.

Then we have—I mean, if we look at the history of the last couple of centuries, I mean the great conference, the Congress of Vienna in 1815 where Lord Castlereagh of Great Britain committed a country to go to war without anyone in Great Britain knowing about it, without the leadership knowing about it, without instructions. And luckily for Lord Castlereagh his bluff was—well, it worked. But it might not have.

#### IMPACT OF TV ON OTHER NATIONS' FOREIGN POLICIES

The only other thing I would say is that it is impressive to me where we have come. And I have two questions in this regard. One is: It has struck me that television has obviously made a great impact on U.S. attitudes and in terms of news and development, but particularly with you, Mr. Turner, I think it is even more impressive how we have been brought together, and it is making an impact on foreign policy.

I wonder if you have, from your perspective of your international network, any assessments on how the foreign policy of foreign states may be affected by what, in effect, is a medium and also a journalistic capacity that is leading the world, and I stress both; not simply the technology, which is very easily transferred—in fact you use often Japanese cameras—but the individuals and people of journalistic stature that I think our country is easily at the forefront. Is that having an affect on the foreign policy of other countries, and, therefore, implicitly, the foreign policy of the United States?

Mr. TURNER. I will tell you what I know, and the evidence is anecdotal; that we are told regularly that as heads of state talk to one another around the globe on various issues, that they frequently use CNN as the common agenda setter because their aids and their ministers—they may not see it, but their chiefs of staff can and we are told do watch, and therefore they have a common language, a common event, incident, an expression that has been broadcast on 14 satellites instantly around the world. And we are told of this over and over again, so I have to assume that it is true. But, again, it is interesting. And after you have said that to yourself, you go on about your business. You will report the news as you think it is interesting or important or significant.

## GREATER SPECIALIZATION IN STORE FOR THE FUTURE

As we march on down chasing technology, mankind always chases technology, and we develop more channels because of the ability to split them up and compress, you will see a greater specialization so that we will have just—referring to my own company—an Asian channel, a European channel, Indian, Latin America, which we do now, probably some kind of Russian; all in partnership with other countries. The lingua franca of the world today is, of course, English in all manner of things, from finance to politics to literature, and English will continue to dominate as the common denominator. But you are going to have with future news organizations, ours included, and I am sure my friend here at ABC, is aggressively interested in pursuing international news networks, many more of them to come, and not very far from now.

And it will not be just the United States, of course. The Japanese, the Germans, the Italians are all seriously looking at conglomerates out of Latin America, are willing to invest heavily in the creation of these kind of regional or global services. The unknown is, of course, how much viewing there will be and will there be an advertising community to support it, because we are in the business of making money. I say that proudly.

## ENHANCED ROLE OF MEDIA IN POLICYMAKING PROCESS

Mr. LEACH. Well, let me just conclude with one other observation. It strikes me, we have always in political science terms talked about the kind of pendulum swings in, particularly in foreign policy, between branches of government, the executive and legislature. Sometimes the legislature is more powerful. Other times the executive seems to hold greater sway. But to the degree the media has become considered the fourth branch of government, it is impressive to me that it is playing a greater role. It is also impressive to me, when you get right down to it, that in this country we are at the forefront of the world in many different areas, but it is not clear that in political leadership we have been as strong in contrast with other societies as maybe we could or should have been in the last three or four decades.

It appears to me in the media there is getting to be a greater competence relative to either American history or to other societies, and that is worthy of noting as we take all of these factors into consideration. Not only is the fourth estate playing a greater role, but at this moment in time, symbolized by some of the finest and most sophisticated foreign reporting, I think it is a role that the country can be more proud than otherwise. And I particularly see that at a time period in which obviously America is turning a little bit more inward again in one of those ebbs and flows of public life. So there is a little bit of a tip of the hat that ought to go with all of the self-examination and self-criticism that is also implied.

Anyway, the whole notation of self-examination is one that the media participates in. It is probably particularly important that it continue to because there is no one else examining you, and you examine us. We do not examine you other than possibly a few hearings like a distinguished member like the chairman might call. And so it is just one of those phenomenons I think we should live with,



but my guess is that it is a bigger plus than minus, and people ought to express that as well as we raise some concerns from time to time when we feel either mistakes have been made or we have been unfairly reported upon.

Thank you.

Chairman HAMILTON. Mr. Faleomavaega.

#### CRITICISM OF SUBJECTS SELECTED FOR COVERAGE

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I certainly would offer my personal welcome to our three distinguished panelists this morning. A couple of observations and perhaps even with one or two questions to the members of our panel.

I think there seems to be a consensus that basically the job of a journalist is to report, not just to state the facts, but not to express any sense of opinion or sense of expertise, at least if I heard it correctly.

I do have a couple of concerns that I wanted to share with the members of our panel. I think some months back it seems that the media spent more time covering Bobbitt's problems and Tonya Harding's inability to skate than mostly anything else that was far more important, in my opinion, and for some 2 or 3 months that all we heard was Bobbitt, Tonya Harding, Bobbitt, Tonya Harding, and there was not really news of any real substance, I felt, there were a lot of other issues a lot more important, I believe, that the media should have made emphasis of.

The question here also of the ability of our national leaders, and I say this for the presidencies, the ability to manipulate—maybe that is a strong word for me to suggest that Presidents too manipulate the media, and then the media does the same thing to the Presidents. I think we have seen this happen from John F. Kennedy, LBJ, our late President Nixon. The problem here was how was it possible for one national newspaper to cause the resignation of a presidency, to say whether this is a—certainly a compliment that should be given to the media for its patriotism. But there are also questions about Deep Throat and not really coming out with the truth or all that has happened in the reporting process.

Where does subjectivity come in as opposed to being objective and letting the American people know what the truth is?

#### MEDIA AND THE PUBLIC TRUST

Of course, then the problem is what is truth. I certainly agree with my friend, Mr. Hyde from Illinois, about the media also have a public trust. The Tiananmen Square where we see this one man facing a tank. But what I was wondering was why the media did not also report the fact that there were 1 million demonstrators that day when this happened, and the fact that there were soldiers that were burnt to death by the demonstrators.

I mean, there is the other side of the coin also in terms of what government's responsibility is and the fact that the government was totally unable to meet this kind of demonstration. To my knowledge, this is the first time I have heard of a demonstration in that numbers, usually about 100,000 or even a little more. South Korea seems to be very popular with that. But I just can't seem to see how we can square—how do you provide the balance? How

do you provide a sense of equity in saying that this is the way it is and that is how we should perceive it?

I suspect that CNN made its mark on the CNN reporting in the Persian Gulf war, and I was curious, Mr. Turner, how President Mubarak of Egypt could have said in such a way, "oh, I watch it on CNN." Is this a good way to popularize CNN's media coverage, by using a President of a foreign country, to say, "oh, I watch it on CNN"? Which I thought was very nice, but how does it tend to influence the public's perception about objectivity when using a public official's comments about watching one network as opposed to the others?

And Vietnam, I am a Vietnam veteran, and I still have some bitter memories of that era. I have always felt that the media has been very, very critical from day one in terms of what had happened. In fact, it even encouraged the Viet Cong to fight, even more determined to fight Americans, and in such a way that eventually the way it turned out, the way it did. Maybe to suggest that it was a bad policy to begin with, I do not know. I have a very special reverence for 58,000 names on the Vietnam Memorial.

#### MEDIA SELF-DISCIPLINE

The media covered very well the Rodney King incident in California, but it never covered the fact that two Samoan youths were shot by a police officer, one eight times in the back and the other one five times in the back. No coverage.

Where do we draw the line in saying be fair to the public's perception, to say the media is really doing its job as opposed to being very highly opinionated and emphasize and say this is the truth and the American people should accept that?

This President has had its share, the Jennifer Flowers case versus Whitewater. Where does the media draw the line in saying, OK, this is where we go and this is where we stop?

And, lastly, I would like your opinions on how do you compare the calibre of American journalists and media consultants as opposed to foreign journalists? Do you think that we are doing a much better job than our friends from the other countries?

#### INTERACTION BETWEEN MEDIA AND GOVERNMENT LEADERS

Mr. TURNER. If I may. We were talking the other day at the CNN bureau here, and one of our senior guys was telling us about when he was a beginning journalist and he went to his first press conference that President Eisenhower had. They were not like the open ones of today. And one of the print guys up and asked some question, and Eisenhower looked out in the audience and said, "Sit down," and that was it.

Yes, there is manipulation that goes on by both sides.

During the Gulf war, I walked past the international desk and one of the younger assistant editors was just slamming down the phone and saying something like, "I wish this guy would leave us alone." And I said, "what is this all about?" And he said, "it is somebody claiming to be Muammar al-Qaddafi who wants to be interviewed on CNN." [Laughter.]



And I said, "maybe it is Muammar al-Qaddafi." He said, "oh." I said, "call this number," and he did, and sure enough, it was. [Laughter.]

And we put him on.

I was pleased that President Mubarak watched CNN. I suppose that our representatives in the great sovereign State of Israel may not have been so amused, but that goes with the territory. You sort of take every viewer you can get, I guess, and be glad for them.

It is whose ox is being gored. I was thinking as Mr. Hyde was speaking earlier, if you could hear the criticism that we receive from people at the White House over our treatment of recent events, you would think that it was the Republicans of 2 years ago. I do not hold to the theory that if you have made both sides equally mad, you are doing a good job. You may be doing a terrible job, and wrong on both counts, if you see what I mean.

As a journalist, you know that you attract criticism, and that goes with the territory. But I know that the last thing we want is to put at risk, at jeopardy, the only thing that we have to offer the viewer, and that is our integrity.

#### CHANGING NATURE OF PRESIDENTIAL PRESS CONFERENCES

Chairman HAMILTON. Mr. Beschloss.

Mr. BESCHLOSS. One point Ed made, which was very interesting, was about Eisenhower in the early 1950's at his press conferences. That is a very good example of how life changes and Presidents adapt to it. President Truman had press conferences in large rooms. They tended not to appear on television. Eisenhower came to the innovation of allowing film cameras to come into a press conference, but the requirement that he set was that there be no live transmission, that his press secretary, Jim Hagerty, review the film to make sure that Eisenhower had not said anything that would jeopardize the national security. And only after that was vetted was the film released and broadcast.

And when John Kennedy, in 1961, decided to stage news conferences live, that was considered to be an enormous risk, because Kennedy might have a slip of the tongue, and it might be a danger to American policy around the world. It is an example of how things change.

#### TELEVISION AS MONITOR OF PRESIDENTIAL ACTIONS

I wanted to just make one or two other points, touching on what Mr. Leach said earlier.

I was very struck by his reference to the Gulf of Tonkin incident. That is a perfect example of how important a role television journalism can serve in monitoring what a President does, either when he makes mistakes or in some cases does not tell the truth. I think if we had better information than people who were in the Senate who had to vote on that resolution—all but two of them supported that resolution—we would have been much more able to assess whether this was an incident that should be used to give a President license for possibly a full-scale war.

## TELEVISION AS INSTRUMENT OF POLICY

Another point is that George Bush, I am told, during the run-up during the Gulf war, was very worried about the fact that he was told Saddam Hussein was not getting very good intelligence about the American political system. I think if you were an advisor to Saddam Hussein and you brought him bad news, you were not asked in to advise him again very often. Bush felt that one of the only ways that you could really cut through that was to have Saddam watch television of the hearings in Congress, where Congressmen and Senators were able to express themselves on American motives in the Persian Gulf. Bush felt that television served a very useful service in piercing Saddam's skepticism that the U.S. Congress would ever support that kind of an effort to retrieve Kuwait.

## TELEVISION AS FORCE FOR INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT

The final point I would like to make is that during the last 40 or 50 years you can make the argument, and I think I would, that television in general has been a force on the side of international engagement for the United States. And if you are someone that feels that the United States as a superpower should have an active role in the world as opposed to a passive role, that is a little bit more easy now when you have television energizing Americans about issues that once might have been thought very distant. In 1920, a President of the United States would have been very hard put to give speeches explaining to Americans why they should care about a country like Kuwait.

## NEED FOR A TELEVISION STRATEGY

Chairman HAMILTON. Mr. Beschloss, you have an interesting sentence in your report. It reads, "Presidents who fail to craft an implicit or explicit TV strategy while dealing with a foreign crisis do so at their own peril."

We are now, I guess, at the point where a President and his advisors, when they are managing a foreign policy or particularly a foreign policy crisis, have to pay a lot of attention to TV strategy. Is that your view?

Mr. BESCHLOSS. Absolutely.

Chairman HAMILTON. And, Mr. Koppel, you make quite a point in your written testimony about if they do not do it, if there is a vacuum there, others step in. So the TV strategy becomes a very important part of a policy, on foreign policy or, I presume, domestic policy as well.

Mr. BESCHLOSS. It does, and one very good example that makes your point is to look at the contrast between the Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara, in 1962, during the Cuban missile crisis, and the Secretary of Defense, Dick Cheney, in 1990 and 1991, during the Persian Gulf war.

Robert McNamara recalls that during the Cuban missile crisis he does not think he turned on a television once during those entire 2 weeks. Needless to say, Dick Cheney would not have said the same thing about the Persian Gulf war.

And what we know about the efforts within the Pentagon to plan for a possible war in the Persian Gulf suggests that a great deal

of time was devoted by the Secretary of Defense and his colleagues in the White House and elsewhere to overcoming the problems and also using the opportunities offered by the great increase in television coverage of that kind of a conflict since 1962.

#### MEDIA OBJECTIVITY

Chairman HAMILTON. Let me ask you a question about your objectivity. You put a lot of emphasis on being reporters and observers. But I think most of us who occasionally do television interviews are aware that when the interviewer comes to us, this is particularly true when doing a taped interview, the interviewer has a very definite point of view. You may ask me or my colleagues 10 or 15 questions, but by the time you edit that down, the quote you take is the quote that supports your point of view.

Now I do not mean to say your point of view is incorrect or wrong, but I often have the impression that you are using me to support your point of view.

Am I totally naive about that, Mr. Koppel?

Mr. KOPPEL. Let me, with all due respect, Mr. Chairman, suggest that you have just expressed your point of view in asking a question. [Laughter.]

Chairman HAMILTON. That is right.

Mr. KOPPEL. And I would—

Mr. HYDE. That is just his way of getting a story. [Laughter.]

#### BEHAVIOR CONFORMS WITH ADVANCES IN TECHNOLOGY

Mr. KOPPEL. I understand, and I cannot wait to see the 15-second sound bite that comes out of the answer. [Laughter.]

I think it is enormously difficult, Mr. Chairman, because if I may, and I am coming at this in a somewhat roundabout fashion, I think what you have started here this morning, I do hope you are not discouraged in any way by the lack of information that you may feel you have gotten because I think it is a dreadfully important subject. And it is important because the changing technology is going to have an impact on us whether we pay attention to it or not.

There is a rule, I do not know whether it is physics or whether it is just happenstance, you know, the role of unintended consequences. For example, we have often asked ourselves over the past 30 or 40 years why it is with all the conveniences that we have in our homes—the washing machines, the dryers, for example—we do we not have a lot more time than our mothers and fathers had 30 or 40 years ago. And I was just listening to a discussion of this the other day on NPR, and one of the answers is apparently, for example, with reference to the washing machine, 30 or 40 years ago we did not do our laundry every day or every other day. We changed our underpants once a week. And the fact of the matter is that we have changed our behavior to conform to what is available through new technology.

To a certain degree, that has also happened in the conduct of foreign policy, and I would like, if I may, just to bring back this discussion to the impact of television on foreign policy.

When I was in Vietnam 25, 26, 27 years ago, we would do a story out in the field on film. The film would have to be shipped back



to the United States. It would take 36 hours by the time we got it from the field to Saigon, from Saigon tranship to Tokyo, from Tokyo back to Los Angeles, from Los Angeles to New York. It might be 2 days before something got on the air.

When I was in Mogadishu a couple of years ago when the forces landed there, we were broadcasting live. The impact of those live pictures quite clearly is different than the impact of the piece of film that is 48 hours old. And I am not altogether sure that the power to have any sort of influence on the nature of foreign policy lies or should lie—and I put the emphasis on the “should lie,”—with us. You quoted from my prepared statement in which I did say that absent a clearly enunciated foreign policy by an executive branch, television will have more of an impact, but so will Congress, so will newspapers, so will anything else. If you have any kind of an informational vacuum, then everything else that is available will fall into that vacuum. And to the degree that an administration understands not how to create a television policy—there is something faintly deprecating about, you know, creating a television policy—the first thing an administration has to do is create a foreign policy. Then it has to worry about how it is going to sell that policy to you folks here on the Hill, to our colleagues in newspapers, to the American public, and frequently, in selling it to the American public, it determines that television is the most efficient means of doing that.

But I would not confuse the creation of a television policy with the creation of a policy. I think all too frequently over the last 5 or 10 years administrations have created terrific television policies, and have forgotten about creating foreign policies to begin with.

#### FACTORS DETERMINING ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES

Chairman HAMILTON. Well, you know, there are a lot of areas in the world, and an administration does not have a foreign policy toward every area.

I will try to conclude this hearing by 12:00. I think my colleagues may have one or two more questions. But, Mr. Turner, I was interested in your comments a little earlier about how you decide to focus your resources.

You have a lot of potential stories out there in the world and in the country, and you run every night, Mr. Koppel, on Nightline. How do you decide to focus your resources? Give me some ideas as to how you make that decision. Do you talk to policymakers? Do you talk to the Congress? Do you talk to people? How do you make a decision whether to send a reporter over to point *x* or to point *y*? What factors go into that?

Mr. TURNER. In my opening statement I addressed the two factors. One, is it a news story; and, second, accessibility. And is it a news story comes down to that much disputed thing of news judgment. To us it is something that we think is significant, important, interesting, and maybe we can make it significant.

For example, there are many stories up here on Capitol Hill that are important but not very interesting. Can there be then by some reporter device, and I mean an honest, open device, can we make this interesting and explain to people why they should care? Why should—does it interest them? Does it reflect a slice of our life of

our times? Is it something that people need to know and should know. There is a lot of that that goes on in journalism—the need to know.

You mentioned earlier about Bobbitt and Tonya and the rest. With all respect, first off, those are good stories. Those are interesting stories; dilemmas of our time. They were metaphors, almost.

And, secondly, though, that is not all we did. We spent a lot of time at CNN, and as did ABC and their various news programs, on many other topics.

I also would like to note that if that is all we did, Tonya and the Bobbitt family, I think criticism would be justified, but the fact is we pay our dues by carrying hundreds, thousands of hours of say congressional testimony and political speeches that do not draw 15 people as viewers, if you look at it purely from a mercenary standpoint, but we do it because we think it is significant and it is important, and it is something that people should be exposed to.

#### BIAS INHERENT IN PRESENTATION OF NEWS STORY

Chairman HAMILTON. You say that you make a judgment as to what is news, but the reverse of that is also true. Some events do not really become news until you get there.

Mr. TURNER. That is true. That is absolutely true. But does that mean that you do not show up?

Chairman HAMILTON. No, no. I understand.

Mr. TURNER. There is the old—back in the 1960's—

Chairman HAMILTON. Mr. Koppel, you make a judgment as to what stories you put on Nightline.

Mr. KOPPEL. Sure.

Chairman HAMILTON. And you are a news reporter and a journalist, and you try to be objective. But you also have your own interests, your own biases.

Mr. KOPPEL. Absolutely.

Chairman HAMILTON. And you are going to push that—you are going to push a story or give a slant to a story that suits you and your producer, are you not?

Mr. KOPPEL. See, you are still asking these biased questions, Mr. Chairman. [Laughter.]

Mr. KOPPEL. Let me make a drastic admission.

Chairman HAMILTON. We have got to make this a little more interesting, Mr. Koppel.

#### TELEVISION AS COMMERCIAL MEDIUM

Mr. KOPPEL. There you go. And in that spirit, Mr. Chairman, let me make an extraordinary admission to you. And that is, we are one of the mass media. If we do not have a huge audience—I mean, the nature of commercial television is such that if we do not have a huge audience, we go out of business. We are sponsored. Therefore, my colleagues and I at Nightline, for example, among the many other factors that we take into account when a story like the Tonya Harding comes along, I, frankly, do not think we did any on the Bobbitt story, but we did several on the Tonya Harding story. And parenthetically, let me tell you that there were more stories done on Tonya Harding on commercial television across the board

than were done on the fall of the Berlin Wall, which probably meets some of your worst expectations about us.

But the point that I was getting to is that ours is not only a mass medium, it is also a commercial medium. And one of the things that my colleagues and I at Nightline try to do is to make sure that there is a balance, so that when a story like the Tonya Harding story falls into our lap, and we know that that is going to have a huge audience, that enables us, then, that almost buys us the ability over the next 2 or 3 nights to do a program on Haiti, to do a program on Bosnia, to do a program on the health program. In other words, important stories but stories which will not get the same kind of rating that we would get on the other.

And I think, to the degree that you have a medium that is influenced by size of audience and the kind of economic rewards that can be made as the audience goes up and down, that is going to be an inevitable part of it.

Chairman HAMILTON. We do not want to keep you, but I do not want to shut this off. Mr. Rohrabacher had a question.

#### HOW MEDIA ACCESS AFFECTS GOVERNMENT POLICY

Mr. ROHRBACHER. This is—I think this goes really to the heart of one of the reasons we got together with you folks today and talking about foreign policy and how your coverage affects foreign policy.

And Mr. Turner just barely touched on what the essence of my question is. And that is, the second half of your determination of what you should put on the news is access, and you just mentioned that and you did not go into detail on it.

The way I see it, it appears to me that repressive, the most repressive dictators in the world actually do not get much coverage, but people who are less repressive, regimes that might be actually heading toward a more democratic situation, or the least repressive dictatorships, in fact free societies, get worse coverage than the most repressive dictatorships because you folks are not permitted in.

And does not that impact on our decision and what we do foreign policy-wise?

Mr. KOPPEL. To a certain degree, Congressman, you are exactly right as far as you go. But that is why I was saying before I think the new technology, and if I may suggest once again, to the degree that you are going to keep on looking at the subject in the months and years ahead, I would recommend that you focus on the new technology.

In one tyranny after another, it was the presence of small cameras—Solidarity, for example, had a place next to a church in Gdansk where they made copies of videotapes, literally hundreds and thousands of copies of videotapes of a news magazine that Solidarity had put together, and it would be passed from hand to hand inside Poland; enormously influential.

Mr. ROHRBACHER. That does impact inside Poland. It does not impact what we see in the United States.

For example, what we have been heralded today several times is the coverage CNN had on Tiananmen Square. Well, why were those cameras there originally? I mean, I—I seem to remember it

was Gorbachev's visit, and, frankly, I think Gorbachev was hyped by the media beyond—he was not the reformer that the media portrayed him to be, I believe, and we could discuss that for hours. But the fact is the media would not even have been there if it was not some sort of a publicity stunt by the Chinese and the Russians. And if the media would not have been there for that visit, you would not have had that media coverage. And the public might not have had this view.

Instead, they might have been over in Israel, for example, and watching the Israeli, and the Israelis have some problems, but they are much—a much freer society than the Chinese. They are certainly a much freer society than the Syrians who murder people without the media ever being able to cover it. This really has a major impact on the way we make our decisions, and it ends up that the dictatorship gets the better half of it.

Mr. KOPPEL. Actually, Congressman, let me quibble with your history here.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. OK.

Mr. KOPPEL. The initial demonstrations began because of the death of Hu Yaobang, and the only reason that the Chinese did not crack down any sooner than they did, and that was in fact what enabled us to have the kind of coverage that you saw, was because of the impending arrival of Gorbachev.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Right.

Mr. KOPPEL. And there was considerable embarrassment within the Chinese Government to crack down at a time when the Soviet leader was visiting. So it was sort of a combination of factors that happened at the time.

Chairman HAMILTON. Gentlemen, we are very much aware you have very heavy responsibilities, and we appreciate your coming this morning. We have had a good, stimulating discussion. You have given us some real insights, and we thank you for that.

We stand adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:52 a.m., the committee was adjourned.]





# APPENDIX

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## WITNESS BIOGRAPHIES

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### MICHAEL R. BESCHLOSS

Michael R. Beschloss, Senior Fellow and Director of the Annenberg Washington Program's Project on Television and U.S. Foreign Policy, is an award-winning historian and the author of *The Crisis Years: Kennedy and Khrushchev, 1960-1963* (Harper Collins, 1991). His other books include *At the Highest Levels: The Inside Story of the End of the Cold War*, with Strobe Talbott (Little, Brown and Company, 1993), *Kennedy and Roosevelt: The Uneasy Alliance* (W.W. Norton & Company, 1980), and *Mayday: Eisenhower, Khrushchev and the U-2 Affair* (Harper & Row, 1986). Beschloss serves as a board member of *Foreign Affairs*. He has held appointments in history at Oxford, the Smithsonian Institution, and the Harvard Russian Research Center. He has also served as a director of the Harry S. Truman Centennial Commission and the PEN/Faulkner Foundation. An alumnus of Williams and Harvard, Beschloss has served as a CNN analyst during the Bush-Gorbachev summits, the August 1991 failed Soviet coup, and the Clinton inauguration.

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### TED KOPPEL

Ted Koppel, who as been with ABC news for 30 years, was named anchorman of ABC News "Nightline" when the broadcast was introduced in March, 1980. In his anchor role, Mr. Koppel is the principal on-air reporter and interviewer for television's first late-night network news program. Mr. Koppel is also Editorial Manager of "Nightline."

Each weekday evening, from 11:35 p.m. to 12:05 a.m., "Nightline" provides in-depth reporting on one or more of the major stories in the news through a combination of live interviews with newsmakers and focus reports from "Nightline" correspondents in the field. Called "... the standout show in all of network news" by the Baltimore Sun and "the most indispensable news broadcast on television" by Time magazine, the program has been acclaimed as one of the finest innovations in television news. Its success is due in large part to the exemplary Ted Koppel, who has established a reputation among viewers, critics and his peers as a journalist par excellence. "'Nightline' has grown so powerful that it's assumed that any top-shelf newsmaker will do Ted first," wrote the Dallas Morning News.

Ted Koppel has been cited by The Wall Street Journal as "the pre-eminent TV

interviewer in America, while The Los Angeles Times refers to Koppel as "the undisputed reigning lion of tough TV interview journalism." "The sole anchor of 'Nightline,' Ted Koppel," wrote The New York Times, "has gained a reputation for being the best news interviewer on television. The Boston Globe wrote: "Years from now, TV newsmen are likely to invoke the name of Ted Koppel the way they now speak about the good old days of Edward R. Murrow."

Mr. Koppel is the recipient of numerous prestigious awards and honors including five George Foster Peabody Awards, eight duPont-Columbia Awards, seven Overseas Press Club Awards, 21 Emmys, two George Polk Awards, two Ohio State Awards and two Sigma Delta Chi Awards -- the highest honor bestowed for public service by the Society of Professional Journalists, among other accolades. Mr. Koppel was honored with the first Gold Baton in the history of the duPont-Columbia Awards for "Nightline's" March, 1985, week-long series originating from South Africa. Mr. Koppel and "Nightline" were cited for "the most extraordinary television of the year."

Mr. Koppel was named the first recipient of the Sol Taishoff Award presented by Broadcasting. He was voted best interviewer on radio or TV by the Washington Journalism Review in 1987, and was named Broadcaster of the Year by the International Television and Radio Society. He has received 14 honorary degrees from Syracuse University, Colgate University, The University of South Carolina, American University, New England School of Law, Fairfield University, Middlebury College, Georgetown School of Law, Dartmouth College, Knox College, Howard University, Duke University, Saint Louis University, and the University of Pennsylvania.

Before his "Nightline" assignment, Mr. Koppel worked as an anchor, foreign and domestic correspondent and Bureau Chief.

From 1971 to 1980, he was ABC News' Chief Diplomatic Correspondent, and for a two-year period beginning in 1975, he anchored "The ABC Saturday Night News."

His diplomatic assignment included coverage of former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, a tour of duty that took Mr. Koppel more than a quarter of a million miles during the days of Kissinger's "shuttle diplomacy."

During the time he was on the State Department beat, Mr. Koppel co-wrote the best-seller, "In the National Interest," with his friend and colleague, Marvin Kalb, formerly of CBS News.

Before being named Diplomatic Correspondent, Mr. Koppel was ABC News Hong Kong Bureau Chief from 1969-1971. In this position, he traveled hundreds of thousands of miles to cover stories from Vietnam to Australia.

In 1968, he became Miami Bureau Chief for ABC News, where his assignments included covering Latin America.

On the political beat, he has had a major reporting role in every presidential nominating

convention -- a total of 16 -- since 1964. He co-anchored ABC News' coverage of the 1980 Democratic and Republican National Conventions and ABC election night coverage.

Mr. Koppel joined ABC News, New York in 1963, as a full-time general assignment correspondent at the age of 23. Prior to joining ABC News, he worked at WMCA Radio in New York City where he was a desk assistant and an occasional off-air reporter.

A native of Lancashire, England, Koppel moved to the United States when he was 13 years old. He holds a B.A. degree in liberal studies from Syracuse University and an M.A. in mass communications research and political science from Stanford.

He is married to the former Grace Anne Dorney of New York City. They reside in Potomac, Maryland, and have four children.

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#### ED TURNER

Ed Turner is executive vice president of CNN, responsible for all the network's newsgathering resources, including the network's domestic and international news bureaus, the Special Assignment investigative unit, the Special Reports documentary unit and the news features unit. He is also responsible for the news interview programs based in the Washington bureau, including "Larry King Live," "Crossfire," "The Capital Gang," "Evans & Novak," "International Correspondents" and "Newsmaker Saturday and Sunday."

Among his major accomplishments as executive vice president are the network's coverage of the 1991 Soviet coup, the war in the Persian Gulf, and the 1989 crisis in China. He was also responsible for the network's dramatic coverage of the explosion of the space shuttle Challenger and subsequent hearings, and gavel-to-gavel coverage of the Iran/contra hearings. He also oversaw the planning of CNN's widely acclaimed coverage of the 1988 and 1984 Democratic and Republican national conventions, primaries, and general elections. During his tenure, CNN has received virtually every major award for television journalism, including multiple wins of the Peabody, New York City Press Club, Overseas Press Club and Sigma Delta Chi Awards.

During his career, Turner has won many awards for excellence in his field. Among them are a 1958 Cannes Film Festival Award for Best Documentary and two Sigma Delta Chi Awards for national reporting in 1963. His work at WTTG-TV brought him eight Emmys for newscasting and production. In 1984, Turner was named one of the Producers of the Year by Millimeter magazine, the magazine of the television and motion picture production industries.

Turner joined CNN in January 1980, six months before sign-on. He served as managing editor/executive producer, then was named vice president in charge of daily operations at CNN's Washington Bureau. He was senior vice president based in Atlanta before being named executive vice president in May 1984.

Turner came to CNN from KWTW-TV in Oklahoma City, where he was vice president and news director. Prior to that, he was producer of the "CBS Morning News." He also has held positions as vice president of UPITN in New York and as vice president/news for Metromedia, Inc. As news director at Metromedia's WTTG-TV in Washington, D.C., he developed the station's 10:00 p.m. newscast and hired such news personalities as Bob Schieffer, Pat Collins, Barbara Howar, and Connie Chung. Turner began his television news career as reporter and anchor for KWTW-TV in 1959.

Turner was born in Bartlesville, OK. He holds a bachelors degree in broadcast journalism from the University of Oklahoma, where he spend two years producing and directing documentary films. In 1985, he was named Distinguished Alumnus of the university's School of Journalism and Broadcast Communications, the first graduate in broadcast journalism to be so honored.

Turner is Vice Chairman of the Foundation for American Communications (FACS) and serves on the Advisory Council at the University of Oklahoma. He is married to Susan Rook, a CNN news anchor.



PREPARED STATEMENT OF MICHAEL R. BESCHLOSS, SENIOR FELLOW AND DIRECTOR,  
ANNENBERG PROJECT ON TELEVISION AND U.S. FOREIGN POLICY

PRESIDENTS, TELEVISION AND FOREIGN CRISES

INTRODUCTION

Asked to participate in a conference on television and the Cuban Missile Crisis, John F. Kennedy's Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara, first said, "I'm afraid I can't help you. I don't think I turned on a television set during the whole two weeks of that crisis."<sup>1</sup> Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney would not have been likely to make a similar comment about the Persian Gulf War.

Over the past four years, The Annenberg Washington Program has sponsored a series of conferences on the impact of television on presidential decision making in three very different U.S. foreign policy crises: John F. Kennedy and the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis; Gerald R. Ford and the seizure of the S.S. *Mayaguez* in 1975; and George Bush and the 1992 Persian Gulf War. Assembling executive branch officials and journalists who dealt with each episode, the sessions were designed not only to add to the historical record, but to isolate ways in which U.S. television coverage affected the terms of the challenge each President faced.

This monograph uses the transcripts of the three conferences, along with communications studies and the historical literature of the past thirty years, to illuminate the impact of television on presidential decision making in selected foreign crises from 1962 to 1993. *Part One* examines how U.S. television coverage of news and world affairs has changed. *Part Two* traces the effects of that coverage on presidential decision making in foreign crises during this period. *Part Three* offers lessons that can be extrapolated from this experience for the modern-day President.

PART ONE: HOW U.S. TELEVISION COVERAGE OF WORLD AFFAIRS HAS CHANGED

The launching of Telstar, the first communications satellite, in 1962, provides a fitting metaphor for the beginning of the period during which Americans turned to television as their most important news source and in which U.S. networks radically increased the amount, quality, and intimacy of their international news coverage—apt because the satellite did so much to bring the world into the American living room.

The American of 1962 who used television as a primary source of news on foreign affairs could not have been very satisfied. A poll taken around that time found that only 29% of Americans considered television the most credible news source available.<sup>2</sup> The evening newscasts of the U.S. networks were no more than fifteen minutes each. As Sander Vanocur, who in 1962 was White House correspondent for NBC, recalled, "We had a program called 'Huntley-Brinkley' . . . Of fifteen minutes, you had about eleven-and-a-half minutes devoted to news after the commercials." Images of foreign events were at least a day out of date: 16-millimeter black-and-white film had to be developed, edited, and flown to the United States. Even later in the decade, as the television producers Michael Mosettig and Henry Griggs, Jr., have written, "foreign news rarely appeared on the evening news shows, unless it was from Vietnam."<sup>3</sup>

This changed rapidly during the 1970s. By the end of that decade, the Intelsat satellite system had expanded to more than 135 nations. The cost of satellite transmission to the United States (especially from Western Europe) declined sharply. U.S. television networks switched from film to videotape, using new lightweight cameras and editing facilities. Turning away from foreign news agencies, networks increasingly used their own reporters, producers, and technicians to cover world affairs. News anchors began anchoring their broadcasts from foreign cities.

Between 1976 and 1981, the mean amount of time devoted to international news per weeknight U.S. network newscast increased from roughly seven to ten minutes. Network news became more profitable. Newly established news programs like "Nightline" displayed an impressive appetite for coverage of foreign affairs. The increase in foreign affairs coverage went hand in hand with the rise of television news; by 1980, 51% of Americans found television the most credible news source

<sup>1</sup> McNamara conversation with the author, 1988.

<sup>2</sup> This is from a Roper Organization poll taken in 1959. Respondents were asked, "If you got conflicting or different reports of the same news story from radio, television, the magazines and the newspapers, which of the four versions would you be most inclined to believe—the one on radio or television or magazines or newspapers?"

<sup>3</sup> Michael Mosettig and Henry Griggs, Jr., "TV at the Front," *Foreign Policy*, Spring 1980.

(compared with 22% for newspapers).<sup>4</sup> During the next decade, the ascent of CNN, whose founder was deeply committed to international news coverage, further enforced the claim of television news on the attention of the public and of the world.

As Vanocur said, "Now, in the present atmosphere, you have round-the-clock news. You have the beginning of the week with the Sunday morning shows. Then you have the weekdays that begin with the morning shows on the three networks and on local stations across the country. You end it with local television and 'Nightline.' . . . You have anchormen who are now omnipotent figures unto themselves, who are at every event, more or less. . . . Now I don't think that this could intimidate a president. . . [but] it would complicate his life."

More than print or radio, television news—especially as practiced with the more and more vivid and dramatic techniques of the 1970s and 1980s—provoked an intense and often passionate reaction to foreign issues. This and the increasing prevalence of foreign coverage had much to do with the fact that Americans of the late 1970s and 1980s were probably more animated by foreign issues than they had ever been before in peacetime.

At no time has this been more true than at moments of foreign challenge. During the past thirty years, presidents have increasingly had to hone their skills in dealing with television during foreign crises, operating in an environment that became very different from that of 1962.

#### PART TWO: THE EFFECTS OF TELEVISION COVERAGE ON PRESIDENTIAL DECISION MAKING

Most of John Kennedy's successors would look on his situation during the Cuban Missile Crisis with nostalgia and envy. Although it was the gravest crisis of the Cold War, Kennedy had the luxury of operating in what they would probably consider to be the halcyon age before modern television news coverage. That crisis serves as a baseline against which to measure the changes wrought over the next three decades.

Throughout the episode, Kennedy repeatedly benefited from a cocoon of time and privacy afforded by the absence of intensive television scrutiny. The first occasion of this was on October 16, 1962, when the CIA informed him of overhead reconnaissance findings that there were Soviet offensive missiles in Fidel Castro's Cuba. This caused him an enormous political problem. A month earlier he had assured the public that there were no such missiles on the island and that if there were, it would cause a confrontation of the first magnitude with the Soviet Union.

Had this occurred in the environment of the 1990s, one of the U.S. television network's satellites might have discovered the missiles at roughly the same moment the CIA did. The news might have been revealed in an ABC special report that included tape of Kennedy's assurances and pictures of the missiles. On that report and on "Nightline" that evening, angry conservative senators and congressmen would have demanded to know why Kennedy had kept the Soviet outrage a secret from the American people, and called on him to fulfill his pledge by bombing the missile sites immediately. Kennedy would have been faced with almost unbearable congressional and public pressure to order an air strike. We now know from Soviet sources that had he done so, it would almost certainly have led quickly to nuclear war.

Ironically, the presence of U.S. television network satellites might have deterred the Soviet leader, Nikita Khrushchev, from slipping the missiles into Cuba. As McNamara said, "When Khrushchev made the decision to introduce the missiles into Cuba, he made it for certain reasons. We can argue whether he was wise or unwise, but he had certain objectives in mind. . . . He took account of the environment he was operating in. If an element of that environment had been the availability of satellite photographs, he would have changed his program, and he would have behaved in a way that made it unlikely that the satellite photographs available to the press would have disclosed what he was doing. . . . He would have planned his operation differently."<sup>5</sup>

Instead, in the environment of 1962, Kennedy had six days during which the public did not know about the missiles. As Vanocur recalled, "There was a lid on this town [Washington], the likes of which I have never seen. Very good sources, sources who were friends, would not answer phone calls. Because of this enormous tape-worm called television now, there would have to be somebody coming out and saying something, or else people would panic. Because if nobody is speaking, that means

<sup>4</sup> This was an updating of the 1959 Roper Organization poll.

<sup>5</sup> Annenberg Washington Program on Television and the Cuban Missile Crisis, Washington, D.C., May 31, 1989.

something terrible has happened. And that is what technology has brought to us. . . . If Kennedy had ordered, 'Don't go on any talk shows, and for God's sake, don't go on Koppel [Ted Koppel's 'Nightline'],] that would have caused a story.'"<sup>6</sup>

Kennedy used his six days to secretly convene his advisers and deliberate about the matter in quiet, without public hysteria. As McNamara said, "When an administration develops a culture of leaks, either because it initiates them as a tool of political administration, as some have, or because it permits them through lack of discipline, as some have, this reduces the time available to consider these complicated questions. . . . We were determined to take sufficient time to thoughtfully and thoroughly consider the options available to us. . . . A culture of stimulation of leaks and/or tolerance of leaks has developed over the last twenty-five years. And I think that limits a president's ability to deal wisely and effectively with certain problems. . . . Once you, as a president, engage in establishing that atmosphere, it gets beyond your control, and that encourages leaks from other people—unauthorized leaks. . . . Manipulation by leaks establishes a culture which carries a price with it. And it's that that we did not really have to contend with during the Missile Crisis. And I think it was very beneficial."<sup>7</sup>

When the crisis committee, "Ex Comm," first met, the consensus was on the side of an immediate air strike. By the end of the week, the majority was for starting off with more modest measures. As McNamara said, "Would the actions in the Cuban Missile Crisis have been different had there not been time to consider this thoughtfully in secret? Well, I think probably they would have been different. . . . I fear that some of our initial judgments [in favor of an air strike], later changed, would have had greater influence."<sup>8</sup> Thus in the culture of 1962, Kennedy had the leisure, with full consultation of his advisers, to make a thoughtful decision that most historians would now find to be wise. A modern-day president would not be so lucky.

Robert Pierpoint of CBS disagreed with McNamara's preference for presidential decision making in secrecy and quietude: "It isn't necessarily true that all the brains on how to handle this crisis, or any other crisis, are all concentrated in the Ex Comm. And I'm not sure that the public itself—or certain participants in the public dialogue—couldn't have been useful, which is one reason why I'm not willing to say that it always has to be done in secret. . . . In our system at least, most of us believe that the public does have some things to offer in a situation like this."<sup>9</sup>

McNamara replied, "I understand what you are saying, Bob, but do you think that thirty-second sound bites put the public in the position of thoughtfully considering and participating in a debate on issues as complex as those we're talking about? I don't think so. . . . What I'm arguing is that at times, even today, I think we benefit from an ability to consider these complex questions before we are deluged with half-informed public opinion. . . . I would still insist on time to decide before we put this nation at risk of nuclear war."<sup>10</sup>

Vanocur added, "There is in my lifetime a kind of acceptance of the idea that what television puts on is the truth. My dear friend Dan Rather [CBS anchor] wrote a book called *The Camera Never Blinks*. . . . 'the camera never blinks' is supposed to be a slogan for 'it always tells the truth.' Well, it doesn't always tell the truth. . . . If you had a week of silence, with those cameras there and 'no comment,' and statesmen going back and forth . . . I promise you someone in the Congress of the United States would get up and say, 'We do not know. I will issue articles of impeachment. I will find the clause where the president is supposed to report.'"<sup>11</sup>

When Kennedy announced his decision on October 22, 1962, in a televised speech from the Oval Office, he was able to reveal the missiles to Americans in a way that served his purposes (as a surprise, dastardly move by the Soviets) and at the same time to persuade the public that it would be foolhardy to respond immediately with an air strike or worse. The result was that the story was of Kennedy's own design: instead of being caught on the defensive (having permitted Soviet missiles in the Western Hemisphere and bearing the burden of replying to critics who were accusing him of weakness), he was instantly able to attract the support of most Americans for a president in a national emergency. As McNamara said, in the atmosphere of the 1990s, Kennedy's decision "would have been a tougher decision to sell."<sup>12</sup>

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*



During the next week, Kennedy dealt with developments in an atmosphere of relative calm. When Soviet ships neared the quarantine line he had ordered drawn around Cuba, he decided to reduce the radius in order to give Khrushchev time to ponder what he was doing and avert a possible nuclear war. Had NBC, for instance, been monitoring the movement of ships with its own satellite and gone live with the news that Kennedy seemed to be caving in (with critical comment from Republican senators and other political adversaries), it would have been much more difficult for him to do so.

On October 27, 1962, an American U-2 plane was downed in Cuba under mysterious circumstances. With some tortuousness, Kennedy resisted demands of military officials and advisers to retaliate, which once again would have escalated the crisis. This would have been much more difficult to do if he had had to contend with immediate television coverage of the event, perhaps with pictures of the destroyed plane and the dead pilot, interviews with friends and family of the victim and comments from his own hard-line critics. We now know that day was crucial in the crisis: Khrushchev was wavering between escalation and backing down. Had Kennedy been compelled to escalate the confrontation at that moment, Khrushchev might have been emboldened to forge ahead—at a time when the Pentagon was preparing for an air strike and invasion of Cuba two or three days hence.

At that time, communications between Moscow and Washington were so primitive that it took six to eight hours for a classified message to go from Kennedy to Khrushchev or vice versa. Thus, Khrushchev was forced to begin sending messages to Kennedy over Radio Moscow, which was not notably more efficient, although it gave him the advantage of not having to rely on the KGB or Soviet military intelligence (many of whose officials opposed a settlement) as intermediary. In the modern atmosphere, a television anchor might well have provided the useful forum for American and Soviet officials to communicate instantaneously, much as CBS's Walter Cronkite moderated an exchange in 1977 between the Egyptian President, Anwar el-Sadat, and the Israeli Prime Minister, Menachem Begin, over the terms under which Sadat might visit Jerusalem.

Pierpoint said, "Because of this international satellite system today, we also might have had direct reaction from the Kremlin. The Soviets, after all, [would be] very aware of the power of television in this country, and they could have been making statements directly to the American people through the satellite system. That would have had an impact. We might even have had Soviet citizens, the man in the street, discussing this whole crisis. . . . We might even have Cubans discussing the situation. . . . It is my sense that the amelioration of the crisis could only have been helped by having this kind of an exchange either with direct information from the Kremlin or from Soviet citizens. And I say that because I believe that the direct coverage of Vietnam helped to end a useless war."<sup>13</sup>

On October 28, 1962, Khrushchev settled the crisis with a final message over Radio Moscow. As McNamara recalled, "He instructed that the public radio transmitter in Moscow be held open for his message. And his message was sent over that so that it would avoid the long interval of coding and decoding. . . . It was to eliminate that time gap of six or eight hours that Khrushchev insisted that the final message be transmitted immediately, because of his fear that we were engaged at that moment in time in initiating military action, which he knew might move out of control."<sup>14</sup>

On hearing of Khrushchev's settlement, Kennedy was worried that if he allowed six or eight hours to pass before Khrushchev learned of his acceptance, the crisis might once again erupt. As Pierpoint recalled, after Khrushchev's message, Kennedy's press secretary, Pierre Salinger, "called us into his office and gave [Kennedy's message accepting Khrushchev's order] to us, and we immediately went on radio with it. Now, television didn't have that immediate capability at that time. And afterward, I went back to Pierre and said, 'How come you gave us this immediately and you knew we were going to go and put it on?' . . . He said, 'We felt that the Soviets needed to know as soon as possible that Kennedy had accepted this kind of surrender message from Khrushchev. We wanted it out as soon as possible. The fastest way to get it there without having to go through the bureaucracy and the translation . . . was to simply get it on the air in the United States and the Soviets would pick it up.'"<sup>15</sup>

Khrushchev consented to a secret transaction with Kennedy: the president would agree not to invade Cuba (and to remove Jupiter missiles from Turkey) if Khrushchev and Castro would forswear offensive weapons on the island and permit on-

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*



site inspections to verify that pledge. In public, Kennedy declared the crisis over and allowed his aides to frame it as an unalloyed victory for the United States. Only years later did we discover both the secret transaction and the fact that it was never consummated. If U.S. television networks had had access to satellite reconnaissance of Cuba after the crisis was over and given a televised forum to Kennedy's critics, the president could have had grievous political problems.

Instead, CBS aired a post-crisis documentary, anchored by Charles Collingwood, which pronounced the crisis a U.S. victory. Watching this program three decades later, David Webster, who produced "Panorama" for the BBC, said, "If that program were done today in a similar situation, it would be totally different. There would be less analysis. There would be more pictures. . . . There would be more conflict: on my left, a lunatic from the left; on my right, a lunatic from the right. That is the way that television nowadays—even what we regard as good television—would tend to cover such a story: in terms of discussion and debate and conflict. . . . And there would be multiple versions of these stories on not only networks, but cable systems and so on, so that the overall effect could be fragmented in the sense of fragmented audiences and multiple versions of the story." McNamara agreed: "I think you're exactly correct. It would be more sensationalized today."<sup>16</sup>

Throughout the Cuban Missile Crisis, Kennedy suffered few of the irritations that modern television causes presidents, but he and his advisers did have the chief advantage—the ability to command large amounts of live television to shape the public's understanding of the crisis and his response to it. As McNamara recalled, "You may remember that [New York Republican] Senator [Kenneth] Keating, after the missiles had been removed . . . stated that all the missiles hadn't been removed and some had been hidden in caves, and that he would eat his hat on the steps of the Capitol . . . if we could prove that they had been removed. And this was a very, very serious problem for the president, because it was casting doubt on whether this threat to U.S. security had been eliminated as he had told the public it had been. So he and I talked about it and I said I thought that I could convince the public that the missiles had been removed if he were willing to allow me to disclose photographs and other intelligence information we normally wouldn't disclose publicly. And he said do whatever I wanted on it. So I had a news conference, which was covered by live TV for an hour and a half . . . and this was all presented on TV and was very, very effective."<sup>17</sup>

Newton Minow, who was Kennedy's Federal Communications Commission chairman, recalled another, more unorthodox way in which Kennedy exploited television: "I was at a meeting in New York with European communications ministers to try to work together on the [Telstar] satellite program when Pierre Salinger called me at breakfast and said, 'Come to the White House right away. I can't talk to you on the phone.' I raced to get the shuttle . . . Pierre said, 'We have a crisis in Cuba. The president is going to go on radio and television tonight to speak to the American people. We want his message to get into Cuba. The Voice of America is being jammed. We want you to arrange for those commercial radio stations which send a strong signal into Cuba to carry the president's message.' Being inexperienced, I said, 'Sure, we'll take care of that.' And I went to the FCC and called in the staff. . . . They said, 'Chairman, that's against the law. We don't even do that in wartime.' And I said, 'There aren't going to be any no's around here. We will do it. How do we do it?'

"It turned out there were seven American radio stations . . . which sent a signal into Cuba. We called AT&T and their engineers said they could patch the Voice of America into transmitters of the seven stations. I said, 'Can you do that without the stations knowing it?' And they said, 'Yes.' . . . I called Pierre back and said, 'Pierre, we can do this technically, but I'll have to call the stations and tell them.' He said, 'You're not allowed to.' I said, 'We're going to have to do something.' . . . So on my own, I called each of the stations myself and said we had a matter of great national security importance: would the boss, the owner, be there at six o'clock to get a telephone call? . . . At six, we called and told them the president was going to go on radio and television shortly and that their station was going to carry it to Cuba. And they all said, 'Fine, no problem.'"

The gambit worked, but there were repercussions. Minow recalled, "When it was all over, the stations came to me and said, 'You know, we took all the commercials off during that time. We're out of revenue. How are we going to get paid?' I called Pierre, and he said, 'We haven't got any money for that.' . . . I went to see the Internal Revenue Service Commissioner, Mortimer Caplan. We asked if they could at least give the stations a tax deduction for their contributions of free time. He said

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

"no," Instead, the station owners settled for a White House luncheon with Kennedy. Still, several months later, the manager of a New Orleans station that carried the Voice of America to Cuba came to see Minow. The manager was a priest, and Minow recalled, "He said, 'You know, we have a little problem here with the FCC on another unrelated matter with our television station. In view of what we did for our nation, don't you think perhaps you could take that into account?' And I did. I called the staff and said, 'Drop the case with the television station.' That's the way life was done in the sixties. I don't think you could do it today."<sup>18</sup>

The war in Vietnam changed many aspects of life in the sixties. Of one such change, Lyndon Johnson was convinced. Speaking of the National Association of Broadcasters one day after renouncing his reelection campaign, he said, "As I sat in my office last evening, waiting to speak, I thought of the many times each week when television brings the war into the American home. No one can say exactly what effect those vivid scenes have on American opinion. Historians must only guess at the effect that television would have had during earlier conflicts on the future of this nation: during the Korean War, for example, at the time when our forces were pushed back there to Pusan, or World War II—the Battle of the Bulge—or when our men were slugging it out in Europe, or when most of our Air Force was shot down that day in June 1942 off Australia."<sup>19</sup> The national folklore now embraces Johnson's complaint that when he lost the support of CBS's Walter Cronkite on Vietnam, he had lost the country's.<sup>20</sup>

Johnson's comments summarize what has come to be the conventional wisdom on television and Vietnam—in its simplest form, that film of the carnage of battle, night after night on the evening news programs, caused Americans to lose their stomach for the war. This "lesson" was cited by President Ronald Reagan and his advisers when they sought to ensure that U.S. military action in Grenada and Libya was as brief and bloodless (on the American side) as possible, and by George Bush and his aides when they did the same thing in Panama, the Persian Gulf, and Somalia.

In fact, the notion that television ended American involvement in the Indochina conflict does not bear up under serious scrutiny. As Peter Braestrup has shown in his comprehensive study of the media during the Tet Offensive,<sup>21</sup> television's portrayal of U.S. forces being defeated in the winter of 1968 may have weakened support for the war by showing Americans that the North Vietnamese would not be quickly or easily vanquished. But it is difficult to extend that point to make the argument that television had a consistently antiwar effect. As Michael Mandelbaum has argued, in the absence of empirical evidence, "it is just as plausible to suppose that television promoted support for the war as to assume that it generated opposition. Seeing fellow Americans fighting and dying might have kindled patriotic sentiments, and inspired in the television audience the determination to see the war through to a successful conclusion, in order to give meaning to those sacrifices."<sup>22</sup>

In his famous acerbic essay on the "living-room war," Michael Arlen of the *New Yorker* noted that the constant, mind-numbing exposure to the war, alongside "The Brady Bunch" and Ivory soap commercials, may actually have inured Americans to the bloodshed on the other side of the world.<sup>23</sup> Indeed Robert Northshield, executive producer of NBC's "Huntley-Brinkley Report," reported that by early 1969, the feeling of boredom with the war among his colleagues "was very marked. The trend was away from Vietnam. About the time . . . when we got tired of combat footage, we said, 'Let's get some pacification footage,' and that was soft stuff, so it went out at the tail of the show. So straightaway people got the impression that the war was less important."<sup>24</sup>

The percentage of CBS and NBC evening news programs including stories on Vietnam dropped from 85 to 90 percent during 1965–1968 to about 70 percent during the next two years.<sup>25</sup> Determined not to "bug out" of Vietnam, President Richard Nixon was probably aided by his shift in emphasis from the bloody (and photogenic) ground war in Indochina to the more abstract-looking air war, pictures of which

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> April 1, 1968, *Public Papers of the Presidents: Lyndon B. Johnson, 1968* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1969), p. 484.

<sup>20</sup> David Halberstam, *The Powers That Be* (New York: Knopf, 1979), p. 514.

<sup>21</sup> Peter Braestrup, *Big Story: How the American Press and Television Reported and Interpreted the Crisis of Tet 1968 in Vietnam and Washington* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1977).

<sup>22</sup> Michael Mandelbaum, "Vietnam: The Television War," *Daedalus*, Fall 1992.

<sup>23</sup> See Michael J. Arlen, *Living-Room War: Writings About Television* (New York: Viking, 1969).

<sup>24</sup> Godfrey Hodgson, *America in Our Time* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1976), p. 378.

<sup>25</sup> George Baily, "Television War: Trends in Network Coverage of Vietnam, 1965–1970," *Journal of Broadcasting*, Spring 1976.

were less emotionally provocative. The effect of the distinction between the two sets of images was not lost on the military planners under Ronald Reagan or George Bush.

Less than a fortnight after the end of the Indochina War, on May 12, 1975, President Gerald Ford was faced with a challenge whose importance was inflated by the fact that it occurred early in his administration and it was widely perceived as the first test of American will after the fall of Saigon. That morning, Ford's national security adviser, General Brent Scowcroft (who later served in the same role for President Bush), told him that the U.S. merchant ship *Mayaguez* had been seized in international waters off Cambodia. The Cambodians were reported to be towing the ship into the port of Kompong Som.

As Ford recalled, "We had had a tough spring—the problems in Vietnam and the economy. We got hit with a serious recession right after the first of the year, and we took some tough actions and we were only beginning to see the turnaround of the economic situation—only the slightest beginnings. So the month of May was not a good month, period, in the country, from our point of view."<sup>26</sup>

Ford's Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, told him that the issues at stake ran far beyond the ship's seizure. Kissinger said that in the wake of Vietnam, a failure of will would be a serious blow to American prestige: "At some point, the United States must draw the line. This is not our idea of the best such situation. It is not our choice. But we must act upon it now, and act firmly."<sup>27</sup> Ford recalled, "I must admit that subjectively I was still resenting our problems in Da Nang, Phnom Penh, and Saigon. So that was a subjective feeling, I think, that combined with the other and probably put me on the side of action rather than inaction."<sup>28</sup>

Ford also remembered the North Korean seizure of the U.S. intelligence-gathering ship *Pueblo* in 1968: "From having lived through the *Pueblo* incident when I was in Congress, I immediately connected the two. Obviously there were differences. One was an American military ship, the other a merchant vessel. But it was an action by a Communist government, one North Korean. . . and in this instance, Cambodian. . . Without being critical of the people who were in charge at the time of the *Pueblo*, I didn't want to be negligent in letting the situation get out of hand. I feel it is always better to be more aggressive than to be sitting back and finding that things have gotten out of your control by your inaction. . . My intuitive reaction was that if we do the same as we did in the *Pueblo*, these people could be held there for a year."<sup>29</sup>

The Cambodians anchored the ship on an island sixty miles from their shore. Diplomatic efforts to solve the crisis failed. Ford was informed of reports that *Mayaguez* crew members were being taken to Koh Tang island, thirty miles offshore, or the mainland, from which rescue would be far more difficult. On May 14, the President ordered the U.S. destroyer escort *Holt* to seize and secure the *Mayaguez*: Marines should rescue crew members and destroy any Cambodian units that got in the way. At the same time, there would be U.S. air strikes against Kompong Som.

Under the War Powers Act of 1973, Ford was first required to consult with Congress. Ford's White House counsel, Jack Marsh, recalled, "What you were dealing with here was the aftermath of Vietnam and Watergate, of course a very assertive Congress, and a press that has gotten over into investigative reporting. . . The War Powers Act requires [that] the president in every possible circumstance [involving] introduction of forces into a situation where conflict is occurring or is imminent must consult with the Congress, but the statute does not say *who* the Congress is. Obviously he can't consult with 535 people, but nevertheless the Congress places great emphasis on it."<sup>30</sup>

As Marsh said, "Here is what happens. Before the president can go up [to Congress] with a consultation statement, or before he can go [public] with a press announcement, first you have to confirm the accuracy of the report and, secondly, you must staff the action. That goes from Defense to CIA to State to NSC, and that's all very carefully drafted and presented to him for either, one, a public statement or, two, an execution order. Now if he is going to pass this information on to Congress, then we must very finely draft a statement that accurately discusses the situation and get it to the members of Congress. In the meantime, the news cycle is continuing and things are happening inside the news cycle that we can't confirm.

<sup>26</sup> Annenberg Washington Program on Television and the *Mayaguez* Episode, Beaver Creek, Colorado, July 20, 1990.

<sup>27</sup> Gerald R. Rod, *A time to Heal* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), p. 278.

<sup>28</sup> Annenberg Washington Program on Television and the *Mayaguez* Episode, Beaver Creek, Colorado, July 20, 1990.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*



What was there on your television? . . . If you got a report back here, you are dealing with the first raw information. So you've got a very significant problem because the Congress plays off the press."<sup>31</sup> For Ford, the speedup in the process caused by television increased the premium on acting fast.

Eight helicopters carrying roughly 175 Marines flew into heavy fire from Koh Tang island. Three crashed, two were disabled. Forty-one Americans were killed, fifty wounded. The 110 Marines who landed found no crew members. Neither did the Marines from the *Holt* who boarded the *Mayaguez*. Then a Cambodian radio station broadcast a message that Cambodia was willing to return the crew. As Marsh recalled, "We also had the opportunity to use television to transmit our messages. . . . The only way you could get the President's message out [fast] was to use television. He directed that it be given to [presidential press secretary Ron] Nessen." Marsh cited this as a case in which television served as "a very helpful communications function on behalf of the administration." Ford jocularly interjected, "Of course, they would never like you to say that. [The press would say:] 'We are being used.'"<sup>32</sup>

U.S. reconnaissance spotted a fishing vessel sailing toward Koh Tang with Caucasians aboard waving white flags. The entire *Mayaguez* crew was rescued. Ford ordered the Marines on Koh Tang to disengage and read a short statement to the American people on television. Then he attempted to comply with the War Powers Act by writing letters to congressional leaders, explaining what he had done.

Ford's domestic counselor, James Cannon, recalled, "After this action President Ford's popularity went up, and with the public standing we had, we moved quickly to show that America was still strong, that Vietnam was not the end of America as a strong power." Marsh said, "What the president was confronted with was restoration of the authority of the presidency. He was having to deal with the energy crisis. He was having to deal with the economic slump. He was having to deal with the budget. He was having to come out of Vietnam. This was a very forceful reassertion of the power of the executive branch of government."<sup>33</sup>

Ford's Director of Central Intelligence, William Colby, noted, "It happened so fast that you didn't have a chance to build up the public reaction in Europe and North Asia and places like that. Once it was over, then they looked at it as against the fall of Vietnam. If the fall of Vietnam had been the critical thing, with the other countries wondering 'what the hell is going to happen to America now,' and suddenly this comes up." Ford's own verdict on the episode was: "I never had any regrets about the *Mayaguez*—never."<sup>34</sup>

Like the Cuban Missile Crisis, the chief importance of television and the *Mayaguez* was what did not happen. When the episode took place, U.S. networks were still unable to provide realtime coverage of the events off the Cambodian coast. The public was largely dependent on the Administration's announcements of what was happening. Throughout the crisis, Ford was able to frame issues in his own way and present information in a fashion that supported his actions. Most Americans considered the liberation of the *Mayaguez* crew a triumph for the president, despite the fact that roughly twice as many Americans were killed in the venture as those rescued.

Had the *Mayaguez* seizure occurred in 1993, Ford would have had to deal with televised images of angry senators and congressmen and weeping families of hostages on television, as well as live coverage of the helicopter crashes and loss of Marines. All of this would have reduced his political flexibility and severely clouded the administration's ability to present the episode as a victory. Had the *Mayaguez* seizure and hostage taking been televised and dramatized, it could have created domestic pressure to renew U.S. military attacks against Indochina, possibly reopening the war. And had the Cambodians taken the crew members ashore and jailed

<sup>31</sup> Ford opposed the War Powers Act. As he said, "We, I think, have to recognize that circumstances have changed. Those of us who operated under the old rules think they were better than what we have to face today. But the big question is: are you ever going to be able to change it? I have deep, deep reservations that you will ever get the press to change its method of operation. I am not optimistic that Congress is going to change its method of operation. So, I think, when you look at it, when you come to a crisis, our country is handicapped in how we ought to or could do the best job. . . . I think the War Powers Resolution ought to be rescinded, but I don't think that's realistic. Secondly, there ought to be a way to greatly limit the people in the Congress who will have this highly classified information. Certainly there ought to be a serious cutback in staffs that are supposed to get the information, but whether that's feasible until you have a crisis, I don't know."

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*



them, Ford would have had to cope with a full-scale hostage crisis of the kind that befell Jimmy Carter four years later.

On November 4, 1979, when Iranian "students" took more than fifty U.S. diplomats hostage, Carter had a great deal of influence over how the story would be played. He could have limited himself to saying that the U.S. would use all of its resources to free the hostages and would hold the government of Ayatollah Khomeini responsible for their treatment. This held out the risk that Carter might seem insufficiently aroused about the problem, but would have made it less likely that the issue would obsess the U.S. government and the American people.

Instead, Carter chose to dramatize the issue, vowing to avoid leaving Washington until the hostages were freed. (In his memoirs he wrote, "My postponing political activities would let the world know how seriously we continued to view these disturbing circumstances."<sup>35</sup>) One motive of the Carter entourage may well have been grounded in domestic politics—seizing the opportunity to restore the sagging popularity of a president who had fallen far behind his Democratic challenger, Senator Edward Kennedy, in public opinion polls. Indeed, Carter's poll ratings shot up and he returned to the center of public attention, dooming Kennedy's presidential campaign.

Placing the fate of the hostages so high on the presidential agenda inspired the networks, even more than they otherwise might have done, to devote maximum coverage to the problem. U.S. networks gave the issue saturation coverage, in part, because it was so important to the president. ABC began running a nightly broadcast called "America Held Hostage" (which later became "Nightline"), pledging not to stop until the hostages were free. On the "CBS Evening News," Walter Cronkite ended every broadcast by reminding his viewers how many days the hostages had been in captivity. Between October and December 1979, the number of viewers of the three national evening news programs jumped from 45 to 57 million.

All of this attention was not lost on Khomeini, who encouraged Iranian officials to influence Americans by appearing on U.S. networks without affording Americans the same privilege in return. Sander Vanocur recalled, "When Khomeini's people watched 'America Held Hostage,' they began to think America was in crisis."<sup>36</sup> Senior diplomat George W. Ball complained, "The greatest communications network in the world has been at the service of the government of Iran."<sup>37</sup>

Some polls showed Americans so exercised about the hostages that many felt that the U.S. should go to war with Iran to free them. When U.S. hostages were seized in Morocco in 1905, President Theodore Roosevelt had the leisure to watch and wait. But now television helped to provoke many Americans to demand immediate action. All of this compelled Carter to respond to every twist and turn in the crisis. It ultimately meant that Carter's reelection would depend much on his success in freeing the hostages, especially in light of the coincidence that Election Day 1980 fell on the first anniversary of their seizure.

On the day of the election, networks spent much of the day airing footage of the past year in the lives of the hostages, reminding Americans of their frustration with Carter's performance on what he had declared to be a cardinal issue of his presidency. Carter's defeat gave his successors a decisive lesson in the political hazards of public presidential overreaction to hostage taking, which George Bush put to special use when Saddam Hussein seized thousands of Western hostages after invading Kuwait in August 1990.

Staging of the U.S. military ventures in Grenada (1983), Libya (1986), and Panama (1989) was strongly influenced by what were thought to be two of the chief lessons of Vietnam—that the American people had severely limited patience for the expenditure of blood and treasure in foreign conflict and that television was a key culprit in exhausting that patience. The design for each campaign was oriented toward brevity and (American) bloodlessness, heavy use of air power, minimizing the danger that television would transmit disturbing images back to the United States and generate opposition to the use of force. In this respect, those three ventures were dry runs for the Persian Gulf War.

On August 2, 1990, when George Bush learned that Saddam Hussein had invaded Kuwait, he operated under the shadow of the Vietnam experience. The conventional wisdom remained that the American people and Congress would rebel against a prolonged, expensive use of force for a distant aim that did not seem directly related to American national security. A president who committed the United States to re-

<sup>35</sup> Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President* (New York: Bantam, 1982), pp. 473–74.

<sup>36</sup> Annenberg Washington Program on Television and the Cuban Missile Crisis, Washington, D.C., May 31, 1989.

<sup>37</sup> Mosetting and Griggs, "TV at the Front."

verse the Iraqi aggression would have had to suspect that the national protest and debate, magnified and stimulated by television, would arouse the American population to the point that their tolerance of actual battle would be minimal. There are strong indications that Bush and his liege officials took precautions against this at major decision points during the Gulf Crisis and the Gulf War.

Richard Haass, who was responsible for the Middle East on the Bush National Security Council staff, observed that "television tends to really telescope and accelerate the pace of events." Recalling the six days that Kennedy had to react to the missiles in Cuba, Haass noted that Bush was expected to react almost instantly to Saddam's attack on Kuwait: "We didn't have six minutes in some ways to contemplate it, and certainly not six hours or six days, if you'll look at the night when we first found out about it and then at every breaking event since then."<sup>38</sup>

Undersecretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz said that this was especially true because "it was the first time in history that we had live coverage of a surprise attack. . . . One of the aphorisms of Clausewitz that [Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff] General [Colin] Powell is most fond of quoting is one that says, 'Beware the vividness of transient events.' And television focuses vividly on transient events. And I do think that the pressure it can create for overly rapid decisions in some crises is a real risk, but I can't see in this one where it happened."<sup>39</sup>

During the first week of August, when Bush made the private decision to send hundreds of thousands of troops to Saudi Arabia, he and his aides worried that pictures of the deployments would appear on television before they were officially announced. As Wolfowitz recalled, "The one thing that the Saudi leadership worried about most in terms of TV and politics was that our deployments would be announced before they were on the ground. They actually had an acute fear that Saddam Hussein would learn we were deploying forces before we actually had any forces on the ground to meet him. . . . In fact, the president announced it. But if the president hadn't announced it, we can be sure that American television would have announced it. It is not possible to deploy any sizable American force without at least getting television coverage that you are doing something. . . . I think, fortunately, we were able to prevent any coverage of how little was on the ground at the other end, and Saddam Hussein probably didn't realize at the beginning just how vulnerable we were."<sup>40</sup>

As Bush and his aides stated their aims in the Gulf and campaigned for support among the American people and Congress that summer and fall, they were determined not to be afflicted by the problems that had plagued Lyndon Johnson. Military expert General Michael Dugan noted that "the president focused early on in discussions with a broad range of military leaders that he had talked to about his concern about reducing the impact of U.S. fatalities."<sup>41</sup>

Wolfowitz recalled, "There clearly was a conclusion that when a decision was made, it had to be presented to the American public without any false reassurances. That doesn't necessarily mean that it would be painted in all its most vivid potential horrors, but, for example, when the decision was made to deploy forces to Saudi Arabia in the first place, there was a very determined effort in the face of understandably aggressive questioning from the press about how many people we planned to deploy—not to give a figure, not to put a cap on. There was a deliberate effort not to predict casualties. There was a deliberate effort not to predict the length of the war. In general, I think there was a feeling that the one thing we could not afford was to lose the confidence of the American public if the numbers went higher, if the casualties turned out to be bigger, if the war turned out to be longer. Inevitably, if you try to predict, even when it's an honest prediction, it begins to sound like a promise. And broken promises are something we can't afford."<sup>42</sup>

Peter Braestrup noted that during the Gulf Crisis, "the military were not under pressure from the White House, as they were during the Vietnam War under Lyndon Johnson, to gild the lily. They were not being impelled. They were not being politicized. You must remember: there was a very short run-up to this war. It was

<sup>38</sup> Annenberg Washington Program Conference on Television and the Gulf War, Washington, D.C., September 26, 1991.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* Wolfowitz cited another advantage: unlike Johnson and Nixon with the North Vietnamese, Bush did not have to worry about a serious group of partisans of Iraq within the United States: "There is nobody that I can identify who ever spoke up for Saddam Hussein. We have always had people speak up for our enemies, and that invariably clouds the debate even among those who are agreed about who our enemies are, but argue about means. But in this case, there was no argument about the nature of Saddam Hussein or the nature of his aggression."

no long, drawn out exercise. That added to the clarity of the story from the media point of view and from the public point of view.”<sup>43</sup>

Bush learned from Jimmy Carter’s experience in the Iran Hostage Crisis. Instead of pledging not to leave the White House and wrapping himself in the plight of the Western hostages taken by Saddam, he remained on vacation at Kennebunkport, Maine, and conducted business as usual in order to keep public attention from being riveted on them and also to reduce their value to Saddam. It worked. As Wolfowitz said, “The president’s so-called Kennebunkport strategy and the overall treatment of the hostages must have been a major factor in Saddam’s felicitous decision to release the hostages when he did.”<sup>44</sup> Without that felicitous decision, American support for bombing Iraq would have been hugely more difficult to maintain.

Through the fall and early winter, the Bush administration’s war planning was much affected by the aim of avoiding developments that might sap public support. Wolfowitz recalled, “Part of the decision to have an overwhelming ground force in spite of, at least, what was in the short term some significant political opposition that arose because of it, was the sense that we would have more control over events and we would have the ability to hold American casualties to the lowest level possible. It would be hard to deny that the experience of television coverage of body bags in Vietnam didn’t intensify people’s sensitivity to casualties.”<sup>45</sup>

Wolfowitz said that, in the spirit of Grenada, Libya, and Panama, “there was some concern that in this age you really have to get something like this over with quickly. . . . Perhaps the people thinking this were thinking, and sometimes they would say it, of what the effect of weeks and weeks of television coverage of bombing might do to support for the coalition.” Wolfowitz insisted that “there was absolutely no attempt that I know of to say, ‘We can’t handle the prospect of television images.’ Aha, you’re going to say, I suppose, and this is a fair point, when the images finally did come on they on the whole tended to buoy public support, and I think through most of those six weeks [of the Gulf War] generally conveyed probably more support overall for our effort rather than, as some had feared, raising questions about how long was this going to go on. . . . Perhaps we did take a subliminal lesson from the Vietnam experience. Clearly a lesson that was imprinted on everyone’s minds, I’d say—particularly our military leadership—was the importance of applying decisive force.”<sup>46</sup>

Part of war planning was the effort made by the Pentagon—censorship, control of camera positions, and pool coverage—to ensure that television coverage of battle would be restricted. As the journalist Joseph Fromm noted, “I think it is noteworthy, the lengths to which the Pentagon went to impose very strict controls on television coverage of the war. And they did a great deal of pre-planning to ensure that television did not have a free run in covering the war, and certainly not covering American casualties.”<sup>47</sup>

Another aspect of war planning and conduct in which television was taken into account was the decision to take extraordinary care to avoid collateral damage during air strikes of Iraq. Haass said, “There was a very conscious understanding and decision not to go after certain targets. . . . For example, if a mosque was in the vicinity of something that would ordinarily be a target that would be above the value threshold, we would just take a pass on it. A decision was made that it was just not worth the political fallout that would obviously accrue if innocents were hurt. . . . There was a kind of extra care—the understanding that in a TV war, you had to be very, very careful.

“The television is an echo chamber or it’s a mirror, and it holds up your actions and it can magnify the impact. So you would normally have all the scruples and moral considerations which would go into targeting. . . . What television does is make you extra careful. You are going to be damn sure that you’ve got extraordinarily high confidence in whatever weapons systems you’re using. . . . But I don’t think television changes the moral calculation. It just sharpens it. It just makes you that much more sensitive.”<sup>48</sup>

As the air war proceeded, live U.S. television coverage had certain unintended consequences. One example was the coverage of SCUD missiles landing in downtown Tel Aviv and elsewhere in Israel. Haass said, “I think those shots had a tremendous impact here. It created an environment of tremendous emotional support and understanding. And it’s one of the reasons, quite honestly, that people where

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*



I work came out of this particular episode of the war with enhanced respect for the Israeli leadership for having been able to resist the temptation to act [and enter the conflict]."<sup>49</sup>

Wolfowitz noted that television pictures of the Patriot anti-missile defense system in operation helped to reassure the Israelis that their decision to stay out of the war was correct. He recalled "that very vivid, almost forth-of-July-like picture of the first interception over Dhahran, where the SCUD came in and the Patriot went brilliantly up and intercepted it. . . . The initial vivid impression on television was that this was a system that works. Indeed it worked beyond any of our wildest imaginations. We had brochures that said that the Patriot could do this sort of thing. I am not sure we believed our own brochures."<sup>50</sup>

Television pictures of bombing targets in Iraq caused U.S. war planners to fine-tune their strategy of avoiding collateral damage. Haass said, "We had a little glimpse of that with the attack on what we thought at the time and since have concluded we were correct in thinking was a command, control, and communications facility, which, at the time unbeknownst to us, was inhabited by several hundred civilians." Wolfowitz agreed: "I guess the bombing of that bunker is the sort of most germane episode, and it's one where the TV images were very vivid. And it's in fact because of the general way in which the air targeting was done, you'd probably have a hard time proving that it had an effect on decisions, but I think it probably did lead us to be more careful. . . . You might well find that there were now some targets that they thought, 'Well, maybe we don't have to hit them right away if this is going to be the consequence.'"<sup>51</sup>

In late February, when Bush and his people had to decide when and how to end the war, television coverage was a factor. Haass recalled, "There was a certain concern about piling on—the sense that the war was going not just clearly in our favor, but decisively. And I think there was the concern in the coalition, particularly in the Arab world, at that point that anything that was this one-sided was a turkey shoot. . . . With that said, it was not the key influence on the president's decision to halt hostilities. That was much more based upon diplomatic assessments we were hearing privately and, most important, our military and intelligence assessments about what had been accomplished and what remained."<sup>52</sup>

According to Wolfowitz, however, "The decision to end the war when we did is one that may have been influenced by television. . . . I do know from the discussions that morning with [Defense] Secretary [Dick] Cheney that there was a growing sense in our deliberations in the Deputies Committee the day before of: how do you justify unnecessary killing? And this came from a lot of us who felt that unnecessary killing is not justifiable, but getting rid of Iraqi military power is a good thing to do. . . . Also how do you explain to an American mother that their child was killed after the war was really over?" Haass added, "It was just not something that you wanted to subject your own soldiers to. And politically we thought it just would not be sustainable at home and abroad. Now implicit in that latter point is that television would be one of the realities that would make it very difficult to sustain. But even if television never existed and we could fight door-to-door, hand-to-hand in downtown Baghdad in splendid isolation, it wouldn't have been splendid at all."<sup>53</sup>

Television may have had its greatest impact at the end of the Gulf War when it showed the suffering of Kurds in northern Iraq and Shi'ites in southern Iraq. Wolfowitz said, "I do think that the vividness of TV images probably heightened the sense of urgency. . . . I think the inescapable fact was that you had a half a million people who, if nothing was done, were liable to all die and start dying rather quickly." Haass agreed: "This was an attempt to meet a pressing humanitarian demand without getting physically involved on the ground. There was a fear of getting bogged down. . . . I would be the very first to admit that I think television probably had the greatest impact at this time in pushing us through these various phases of policy than at any time during the crisis: the need—not just a cynical, political need, but also just the human need. . . . The political and the human desire to respond to what was unfolding on the screen had a sizable impact."<sup>54</sup>

Throughout the Gulf Crisis and the Gulf War, Bush, like earlier presidents, sought to maximize television's value as a means of allowing him to frame the issues and gather domestic and international support for his policy. Like Kennedy and the Cubans, Bush used television to address the Iraqi people directly. Of the

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*



president's awareness of television's importance, Haass said, "I can't exaggerate that. It really became at times our chief tool—and I don't mean this in a cynical way—for selling our policy. . . . It was not clear to me that another group of human beings invested with the responsibility that George Bush and his inner circle had would have come to the same choices. But even had they come to the same choices, it is not clear to me they would have persuaded the domestic audience or the international audience largely to support those choices. And we would not have succeeded, I think, without television."<sup>55</sup>

Milton Viorst of the *New Yorker* agreed—unhappily: "I am a little troubled that the press did such a terrible job over the course of this entire period in allowing itself to be manipulated. . . . I think from the start President Bush set the agenda in the days following the second of August, and he did his job, he did it well. I think the press swallowed his agenda hook, line, and sinker. . . . I think that President Bush made the decision right from the beginning that the only available course was the use of force, and I think the press never challenged that."<sup>56</sup>

Since Saddam was surrounded with sycophants disinclined to bring him bad news, the Bush administration sought to use television as a means of enforcing the reality principle. Wolfowitz recalled, "We were conscious throughout that television was one of the few ways to get any message to him directly, not just because diplomatic channels were largely blocked—in fact, diplomatic channels were still available in spite of the isolation—but because you couldn't have any confidence that any of his subordinates would convey a message exactly as it was conveyed to them. No one wants to spread bad news in that system."<sup>57</sup>

The gambit failed. Until the war began in mid-January, Saddam remained unpersuaded that the United States and the coalition were serious about using force to reverse the aggression in Kuwait. Wolfowitz said, "Our strategy was to try to get him out of Kuwait with the threat of the use of force, and in this respect, the television images of debate in the United States must have strengthened his conviction that we wouldn't do anything and, if we ever did anything, we wouldn't do it very effectively. Television isn't the culprit in this. Hitler drew the same conclusion about democracies with only newspapers and radio to draw from. It's an inevitable consequence of democratic debate."<sup>58</sup>

As Wolfowitz recalled, "Saddam Hussein was absolutely convinced that air power was an insignificant factor in warfare. We had, in his view, demonstrated this in Vietnam. It had been demonstrated, in his view, in his own war with Iran. I don't know why he never paid more attention to the Six-Day [Arab-Israeli] War. Apparently he didn't. And accompanying that was the idea that 'if land warfare is the decisive arena, then what is going to matter is casualties, and the Americans may inflict more on me, but I can withstand far more.' . . . We did try to get good coverage to CNN about precision-guided munitions: one completely failed attempt to get some people to run some photos of the Mitla Pass to think how we could get the message across to him that air power in this theater, with our technology, is going to be a weapon he has never encountered before. But we obviously failed."<sup>59</sup>

General Michael Dugan noted that "television was useful in that Saddam Hussein got to see what was going on in the rest of the world. One of the things he predicted, and one of the things that was an element of his strategy, as I see it, was to broaden the involvement of the Arab world. He was looking for a rising of mobs in the streets throughout various Arab countries."<sup>60</sup> That pan-Arab uprising never came.

Television was a useful megaphone for the effort to deceive Saddam's generals about the shape of the final ground campaign for Kuwait. As Wolfowitz said, "The extraordinarily successful deception operation that kept most of his forces looking out towards the Persian Gulf or focused on the Kuwaiti border, which apparently kept him from extending defenses west along the Saudi-Iraqi border, and that left most of his generals stunned and surprised when we turned out inside Iraqi territory. We were helped in that regard by the large number of commentators who said in public that we would do the stupid thing that he was counting on, that we would go right into the teeth of his defenses and suffer enormous casualties. And we had to bite our tongues and say, 'It ain't going to be that way.'"<sup>61</sup>

Much was written after the Persian Gulf War that the "Vietnam syndrome" had been vanquished, that future presidents need not worry that television might stir

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

up the American people's unhappiness about the use of force. This is difficult to accept. Public acceptance of a six-week war with minimal American casualties and carefully controlled television coverage does not mean that Americans will accept another war that does not meet those strict parameters. Dugan said, "Whoever is going to be the commander-in-chief the next time we have a significant engagement of military forces is going to be in tough shape when his casualties go above 150. So I think there are some unrealistic expectations in the American public about the use of force and the successes that we could and should expect."<sup>62</sup>

Braestrup disagreed: "I think there had been enough credibility built up, and enough of a public sense of the competence of our military people, so that another Tet Offensive—for example, say the ground war had gone on for two weeks and in desperation Saddam uses some poison gas, and we lose 150 people to that, willy-nilly. I think the American people would just have gotten mad. Everybody forgets the American people can get mad."<sup>63</sup>

Wolfowitz pointed out that in the Gulf War, "we were dealing with a clearcut aggression by an evil man in a particularly dangerous part of the world at an otherwise hopeful time in history. Put all of those things together: the wrong man, the wrong place, the wrong time, and an action that had barely even the pretense of a justification—I think even Hitler worked harder at justifying his aggressions—you have a set of circumstances that are not likely to repeat themselves, very little ambiguity about the stakes involved or the morality of the issue."<sup>64</sup>

Journalist and scholar Michael Janeway of Northwestern University felt that the Bush administration was also singularly blessed by dealing with a media that was "very conscious of the Vietnam experience. It was conscious of having been the unwelcome messenger. To some extent, it inhibited itself—what in the business has been called 'yellow ribbonitis'—consciously being patriotic in the newsroom, having yellow ribbons on the 'CBS Morning News,' being very concerned to echo the president's very carefully orchestrated efforts to keep the discussion and public opinion focused on the welfare of the men and women in the field. This was echoed by TV. So we saw TV and the press not particularly in an adversary role. Again we must question what would have happened if the war had gone on longer, had casualties come into play. . . if there had come to be many more questions about whether this was a just war or not. How would all of this have played out in terms of that double-edged sword that both government has and TV has if this controlled experience had become more uncontrolled?"<sup>65</sup>

In 1982, during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, Ronald Reagan was so disturbed by television pictures of the destruction that he telephoned the Israeli Prime Minister, Menachem Begin, and demanded a halt to the bombing. (As it happened, Begin had already ordered the bombing stopped several hours earlier.)<sup>66</sup> Although he was Reagan's vice president, George Bush would privately have scoffed at what he would have considered to be an excessively emotional approach to foreign policy.

Thus it was ironic that he should be president during the 1992 famine in Somalia, where domestic turmoil prevented food and other supplies from going where they were needed. Whereas newspapers reportage did not turn the Ukrainian famine of the 1930s into a burning domestic American issue, television coverage of the famine in Somalia played a critical role in generating public pressure on President George Bush to intervene. Without television coverage of the Somali plight, it is unlikely that the Bush administration would have felt so compelled to send troops to Somalia in December 1992. Likewise, without the incentive of television coverage of American troops in an unambiguously heroic mode (and of the president greeting them and their Somali beneficiaries three weeks before leaving office), Bush might have declined to act.

#### PART THREE: LESSONS FOR THE MODERN-DAY PRESIDENT

The experience of the past three decades offers vital lessons to President Bill Clinton and other U.S. leaders as they make foreign policy and manage international crises in a television age:

**1. Television offers presidents a superior weapon for framing issues and selling policy in crisis.** From Kennedy and Cuba to Bush and Somalia, the access to television time afforded a president and the extent to which the White House can help to shape television coverage give a president an important advantage in dealing with a foreign crisis.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> Alexander M. Haig, Jr., "TV Can Derail Diplomacy," *TV Guide*, March 9, 1985.

**2. Television also amplifies public opposition; most presidents forget it, but this can improve and strengthen policy.** Television coverage of antiwar movements during Indochina and the preparations for the Gulf War, for example, forced presidents and Congress toward greater clarity and candor, which, in the end, benefited those leaders and the democratic process.

**3. Television can encourage presidents to favor crisis management over long-term planning.** Because television focuses on the tangible and the dramatic, it rewards crisis management over crisis prevention.

**4. Television can drastically reduce the time, secrecy, and calm available to a president for deliberating with advisers on an urgent foreign problem.** No future president will have the leisure that Kennedy had to think about the Soviet missiles in Cuba, but presidents should seriously consider buffering the early decision-making process as much as possible.

**5. Presidents cannot presume that they can maintain a monopoly on information for long.** Thanks in part to television, just as a Kennedy in 1993 could not keep the missiles secret for six days, Bush could not expect to keep the shape and timing of the initial attack on Baghdad secret for long.

**6. Television allows presidents to communicate with adversary leaders and populations.** Just as Kennedy spoke to the Cuban people and Ford spoke to the Cambodians, Bush tried to use CNN and other networks to influence Saddam Hussein and his people.

**7. Television can seriously affect relations with allies.** Had Saddam learned from television of the American deployment in Saudi Arabia before it was announced, the troops and the Saudis could have been badly endangered. Had Israelis not seen the effectiveness of the Patriot on television, they might not have been so willing to stay out of the Gulf War.

**8. LBJ's notion that Vietnam was lost on television is questionable.** Americans tolerated five years of a television war; it is equally plausible that the public grew inured to the televised bloodshed.

**9. Nonetheless, experience suggests that it is in a president's interest to design U.S. military ventures to be as brief and telegenic as possible.** Since it is hard to argue that the bloodshed necessarily strengthens public support for war making and since the modern attention span is ever shorter, a president benefits from brevity and bloodlessness.

**10. Presidents shouldn't obsess themselves in public over hostages.** Beware the negative lesson of Jimmy Carter and Iran, and honor the positive lesson of George Bush and Iraq: minimizing television attention to hostages lowers their value to the captor and prevents Americans from rating the president on how quickly he is able to free them.

**11. Unexpected events shown on television can have inordinate influence on the public's perception of a foreign crisis.** This, for example, encourages military planners to avoid bombing churches, hospitals, and other civilian sites. Had the CNN "boys in Baghdad" been badly injured by American bombs, American public support for the Gulf War would likely have been eroded.

**12. When appearing on television during a crisis, a president and his high officials must be absolutely honest with the public.** A modern-day "credibility gap," with inaccurate White House statements shown endlessly on television, can be fatal to a modern president in crisis, although, as the Gulf War shows, the public has a considerable tolerance for military disinformation that can later be shown to have saved American lives.

**13. Censorship can risk a damaging backlash.** Vietnam and the Gulf War are excellent examples—the former being a case in which the backlash occurred, the latter, a case in which it might have occurred had the conflict lasted longer.

**14. During use of force, there is such a thing as too much military success.** Vivid television pictures of violence against Iraqis could have damaged U.S. public support for the Gulf War.

**15. Television can help create an unexpected agenda, especially during the run-up or the endgame of a war.** Examples: the post-Gulf War Kurds and Somalia and what might have happened over the *Mayaguez*.

**16. Presidents who fail to craft an implicit or explicit television strategy while dealing with a foreign crisis do so at their peril.**













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